

THE POST-WAR MIND  
OF GERMANY  
AND OTHER  
EUROPEAN STUDIES

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## P R E F A C E

THE essays collected in the present volume were written independently, and follow no concerted plan. But they are all occupied with some aspect of one or both of two principal lines of thought and purpose. One of these is indicated in the sub-title. They are concerned in the first place with international affinities and relations. Two essays deal with the influence of Shakespeare on the Continent ; one with the relationship, in which influence has hardly any part, between Dante and Milton ; one with the growth of international understanding in the English poets. Two are simply attempts by an Englishman to make more accessible to English readers some less familiar aspects of the contemporary life of two great peoples. In the second place, within the limits thus laid down, they are concerned with what may be broadly called culture, in its relations on the one side with poetry, on the other the problems of politics and national life. The first essay attempts to trace some of the reactions of political defeat and social revolution upon the mind of post-war Germany ; the fifth, some less recognized aspects of the mind of the new Russia and of the

## PREFACE

new Russian state. The second essay deals with the points of contact in the careers of the two great modern poets who, after failing in statesmanship only because they saw too far, made poetry itself an instrument of national regeneration. The third and fourth show how Shakespeare, without any such aim, nevertheless became a potent factor in the making of modern Germany, and how his stirring pictures of English national life, in particular, quickened the dramatic imagination of the youthful Pushkin. The last essay is intended as a brief historical expansion, within the sphere of English poetry, of the Wordsworthian text :

‘By the soul  
Only the nations shall be great and free.’

I desire to express grateful acknowledgement to Dr. W. Rose, of King’s College, London, for the loan of books used in parts of the first essay, and to Professor Edmund Gardner, for similar help in dealing with the obscure early career of Dante, in the second.

C. H. H.

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# THE MIND OF POST-WAR GERMANY

## PREFATORY NOTE

EVERY serious student of international affairs will appreciate the extreme hazardousness of that which the present essay attempts. To chart the prevailing currents in the intellectual life of a complex contemporary civilization is difficult at any time; much more under the stormy conditions which follow a great war, one in which both the nation observed and that of the observer were engaged, on opposite sides. But it has seemed to the writer so important to make more generally accessible to English readers some characteristics of present-day Germany which war and post-war mentality has largely obscured, and which in justice to her ought to be known, that he has faced the risk. He is himself less afraid of having been influenced by war-bias in his reading of Germany than of having been led by his profound faith in her future to interpret equivocal symptoms too confidently in the better sense. But he would emphasize the limits expressed in his title. This essay is primarily a study of the post-war *mind* of Germany, and only incidentally or by implication a study of her *mœurs*. In Germany, as everywhere else, the war removed barriers and loosened ties. The post-war years added, for her, physical suffering and nervous tension which called out in some heroic endurance and energy, but sapped in others every ethical impulse and resource. Much, if not most, of the thinking adumbrated in the following pages was done under conditions which demanded the exercise of such heroism in a high degree.

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## I

**F**EW modern nations have suffered a catastrophe which subjected all the bonds of national cohesion to so terrible a strain as Germany, between November 1918 and June 1919, suffered from the military overthrow, the blockade, the revolution, and the dictated Peace. Up to the eve of the Armistice the mass of the people were confident of victory. Suddenly, they had to face the problem not merely of recovery, but of continuing to exist.

Let us consider for a moment how extraordinary the problem was. In the first place, Germany, so recently

the mightiest of European powers, was no ancient, consolidated realm, welded together by centuries of proud and conscious nationhood ; no commonwealth united by ages of common action, in war and peace, in the making of laws, the founding of colonies, the building of empire. As a race she was ancient, and clung with tenacity to her ancient traditions ; but as a nation she was new and raw, and her venerable traditions made but poor cement for the too freshly baked bricks of her fifty-years empire. What did it avail that she had destroyed the legions of Augustus at the beginning of the Christian era, centuries before England became a kingdom ; or that her Franks had given their name to her future rival beyond the Rhine, together with a ruler of legendary grandeur, the German Caesar of a new Roman empire, Charles the Great ? or that the German emperor of the Middle Ages was in theory God's vicegerent of the universe in temporal things, as the Pope in spiritual things ? All this did not prevent the medieval German empire from being a phantom, which did penance at Canossa, was shattered to pieces in the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and finally expired by the fiat of Napoleon in the first decade of the nineteenth.

The new Germany had to be built up afresh out of a mere fragment of that empire, the mark Brandenburg ; only reaching in the Prussia of Frederick the Great, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the coherence of a nation. But Frederick's Prussia occupied not more than one-third of the Germany of to-day ; and the remaining two-thirds, including most of the Rhine lands and the whole of the South, formed a loose aggregate, in part forcibly annexed, like Hanover, in part reluctantly bought by large concessions, like Bavaria ; states for the most part inveterately 'particularistic' in their political sentiments, and only in crises of intense enthusiasm or peril, willing to set aside their 'state' patriotism and to think and act as members of a German nation.

No doubt this loosely-knit political aggregate, to which the genius of Bismarck had for a generation given a semblance of greater structural coherence than it possessed, had an inner, spiritual nexus of great tenacity. It had the bond of a common language, one not very flexible or graceful, but unsurpassed in 'home-felt' sincerity, and unmatched in subtle profundity, among the tongues of Europe; of a common literature of poetry and philosophy which had changed the currents of European thought and compelled the nineteenth century to reinterpret its own experience; it had in the *Nibelungenlied* the noblest epic of the Middle Age; it had a scarcely comparable wealth of folk-song, still ringing out to-day in every corner of the land; and it had an entirely incomparable wealth of musical creation.

But neither these spiritual bonds, nor the stress of common national peril, availed to overcome the disruptive effect of the sudden shattering of the fabric of empire. Bavaria, always resentful of its subordination to Prussia in the Reich, became immediately a seat of violent tension; the Rhinelanders, fervently Catholic, and still acutely mindful of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, temperamentally, too, more akin to their French neighbours than to their Prussian fellow-countrymen, might even have claimed autonomy, had not the incredible folly of those French neighbours, by their paid and manufactured figment of separatism, fanned the sparks of German patriotism into a flame of national passion.

And to these political and religious sources of division must be added two others, not less formidable, derived from the economic ground-work of the national life. There is, first, the division between agriculture and industry. East of the Elbe Germany is a land of peasants and great estates; while West Prussia is the seat of the most intense and concentrated manufacturing activity in Europe. And these two populations are in reality what the agricultural and industrial areas of

Great Britain were called by the authors of *Coningsby* and *North and South*, but can only by a bold figure be said to be—two ‘nations’: the peasant, a hundred years behind the artisan in political intelligence, still subject to the feudal tyranny of Junkerdom, bound by customary ways prescribed by his lord, and in other respects showing the dint of the manacles from which he had been nominally released little more than a hundred years ago.

But the industrial ‘nation’ is itself divided into two not less alien elements by the standing antagonism between social democracy and capital. Each, before the war, had reached a point of intellectual equipment and productive fertility unequalled in Europe. The Social-democrats had a powerful, if ultimately fallacious, reasoned creed, a philosophy of economics elaborated with all the resources of Hegelian logic by the masterful brain of Karl Marx. They alone consistently opposed in the Reichstag not only the government but the imperial system itself, and their party, alternately persecuted and courted by Bismarck, steadily grew in numbers and power. No other country possessed a socialist party comparable in diffused ability to that of Germany. There if anywhere the Marxian doctrine that wealth is the product of labour seemed destined to make headway. But it was Germany, too, that in those same years of the Bismarckian empire gave the most dazzling demonstration of the ability of capital, armed with science, invention, and organizing technique, to create fabulous wealth for the individual capitalist and a livelihood at least for armies of workers. The generation before the war saw the building up of the colossal enterprises which, under men like Krupp, Siemens, and Ballin, won for their country hegemony in metal-work, electricity, and ocean shipbuilding.

## II

We can now appreciate the effect of the sudden, and for almost the entire nation unexpected blow of November 1918. Disasters far more complete and decisive than this have welded the defeated nation into a heroic unity like that of Rome after Cannae. But Germany, her normal looseness of cohesion aggravated by prolonged suffering of body and mind, could not emulate the tribal simplicity which sinks all dissension at the cry 'the enemy is at the gates!' On the contrary, for perhaps half the nation, defeat was a release; and for a large section the humiliation of the army was a triumph. They hailed it as the fall of militarism. The army itself was permeated by a temper which prompted it to side with the revolution rather than to suppress it.<sup>1</sup>

There was little open disorder, and almost no bloodshed, but the inner control of a state dominated more and more by military power was suddenly removed. A people deliberately left untrained in politics, and accustomed to think in terms of provincial, class, or occupational, rather than of national, interests, found itself thrown back upon its own intellectual, moral and cultural resources if it was to be saved from complete disintegration and anarchy. Those intellectual, moral, and cultural resources were, however, immense, and they were finally destined, we may venture even now to say with assurance, not merely to save Germany's integrity, but to restore her greatness. But the immediate effect of the catastrophe was, none the less, an

<sup>1</sup> The account which follows is largely based upon the authoritative though communistically biased book of Mr. Philips Price, *Germany in Transition*. Mr. Price witnessed the whole 'transition' in Berlin, from the end of November 1918. The demeanour of the returning army in the streets of Berlin is vividly described by R. Schickele, *Der Neunte November*. Bernhard Kellermann's novel of the same title paints the final reactions of the war in Berlin society on a larger canvas with impressive power.

explosion of conflicting wills. The mind of Germany was in those first years more clearly than ever a function of many minds, each equipped in varying degree with the tenacity, the passion for system, and the temerity, of German mentality at large. Leaving aside the disruptive forces which threatened the adhesion of certain states—of Bavaria, Saxony, Rhineland—we will glance only at the aspect which the old political antagonisms assumed under the conditions, at once provocative and emancipating, brought about by the Armistice and the Revolution.

Conspicuous above all is a move of the centre of gravity to the Left. The Social-democrats, who had consistently opposed or reluctantly accepted the dominance of the military state, now became the strongest party in the country. And the great middle-class parties, including the Catholic Centre, though as little as ever disposed to socialism, shared to the full the socialists' loathing for war, and very largely their demand for arbitration, as a solution of international differences. It is reckoned that five-sixths of the first Constituent Assembly, elected early in 1919, were united in this temper. They were to be the nucleus of the new Germany. But this outward unity covered an extraordinary diversity of aims, interests, and principles, precariously allied rather than reconciled. And at either extreme there was explosive material. At the one stood the body of Communists, encouraged by the triumph of Bolshevism, organized on its model in 1917, and determined to bring about by revolution the overthrow of the capitalist system. At the other extreme stood the mass of the officers of the defeated armies and whatever remained of feudal Germany in the castles and manor-houses of Junkerdom; with a multitude of the elderly and the once well-to-do in all parts of the land who had grown up and thriven in the glories of the Kaiserreich, and could not believe that these had gone for ever.

Both these extreme parties were in violent antagonism to the government, and to the spirit of the republic as embodied, a few months after the armistice, in the Weimar Constitution ; both attempted to make themselves masters of the state by violence. But in moral and intellectual weight, if not in political importance, the two 'revolutionary' parties are by no means comparable. The nationalist reaction has been, and still remains, the more dangerous. Its principal seat, Bavaria, has been the focus of monarchist agitation, fostered by political jealousy of Prussia, by the peasants' hatred of industry, by the Catholic hatred of Protestants, and by the insidious intrigues of France. And nationalism had a base ally—the dregs of its heady cup—in the anti-semitism excusable only in ignorant peasants exploited by the economically capable Jew ; a hideous superstition, fomented by an illusory race-consciousness, which was to strike down at the height of their powers and of their service to their country, one of the few men, and one of the fewer women, of commanding genius in the war period, Walther Rathenau and Rosa Luxemburg. Had not the policy of the Allies drawn over to Nationalism thousands who saw in an appeal to arms the only means to the security of the German state, we might find the post-war mind of Germany not so much reflected as refracted in a Nationalist mentality which at its highest was a romantic dream, at its lowest a foul and inhuman passion.

The Communist extreme had its share of weakness and illusion. But the creed which it attempted, occasionally by violence, to impose upon the country, was rooted in a philosophy, and based upon a closely argued interpretation of economic facts. In common with the whole body of German socialists, it derived from Marx, and shared to the full with them the Marxian heritage of logical method and range of sociological ideas in which German socialist literature is so much richer than

that of any other country. The controversy of the communist party with the socialists sprang from their divergent theory of the destiny of the 'surplus product' of industry under the capitalist régime, and their consequently divergent attitude towards that régime itself. Whereas the 'Revisionist' and 'Centrist' groups of Socialists, led by an Eduard Bernstein and an Otto Bauer, believed that the accumulated products of a prosperous industry were ultimately diffused among the workers, and could thus make at least *ad interim* terms with capitalism, the communists insisted that these accumulations would always seek an outlet in foreign markets, thus inducing attempts to capture trade, to win colonies, in other words, imperialism and ultimately war. For them therefore capitalism was the enemy, to be tolerated only for the moment, and to be overthrown if necessary by revolution.

The communist argument, which this is not the place to examine, probably took too little account of the openings abroad for capital and its 'accumulated products' otherwise than by the capture of colonies. But it was driven home by the passionate conviction and brilliant argumentative power of a remarkable woman. Rosa Luxemburg had, from her first emergence in the nineties, attempted to recall German socialists from quasi-alliances, so alluring in that golden hey-day of German industry, with 'bourgeois' capital, to a strict following of the social gospel of their common master, Marx. An upper layer of skilled workers might profit by the capitalist régime, but for the labouring masses there was no prospect of relief save by the overthrow of capitalism, and its instrument and safeguard, the military state. Against these enemies she wrote and spoke with fearless vehemence and unflagging brilliance. The crisis of 1914, in which the majority of socialists reluctantly supported the national cause, found Rosa Luxemburg intransigent, and she passed

most of the war years in prison. The letters which she wrote during this enforced leisure reflect the rich gifts of cultured interest, of delicate and eager insight into art and nature underlying the white-hot passion of the revolutionary leader. The premature and hopeless revolt against the republican government, in January 1919, in which she lost her life, tragically closed a career which must remain memorable in the history both of German communism and of German womanhood.<sup>1</sup>

It was from these two extremes that the only dangerous disturbances came—the communist risings, chiefly in Berlin and Munich, and the Kapp Putsch and the Hitler Putsch in the same cities. All were frustrated by the resisting and resilient power of the solid mass between. But in spite of momentary checks, both these currents of extremer German thought and will held on. Both were sustained and reinforced by external influences. The spectacular triumph of the state in which Trotzky and Lenin had realized the doctrines of Marx was a standing summons to Marx's countrymen to emulate them. Far graver was the effect upon military nationalism of the continuation of the war by the Allies in the dictated peace of Versailles, the brutal circumstances of the Rhineland occupation, and the invasion of the Ruhr. These experiences, only mitigated by Locarno and the Dawes report to-day, converted the remnant of cashiered officers and out-of-date Junkers, who originally formed the insignificant right-wing of the new republic, into that full half of the German nation which saw only in another war, led perhaps by another Kaiser, a relief from its intolerable conditions and the way back to its old greatness. Nationalism has during the last two years shown its formidable strength in the ballot-boxes. Experience has not yet decided what precise point in the scale of authority, between the

<sup>1</sup> Philips Price, *u.s.* Part iv; Rosa Luxemburg, *Briefe*.

American president who reigns and governs and the French president who neither governs nor reigns, will be occupied in practice by the president of the German republic. But nationalism might well seem to be within sight of a definite control of the ship of state when Hindenburg, the most commanding figure among her generals, and a devoted servant of the ex-Kaiser, was chosen by a narrow majority to the presidency. And when, some months later, several nationalists received a place in the cabinet, that consummation seemed to be brought nearer still. Subsequent events have given some support to these surmises. The president, a very simple character, undoubtedly loyal to the republic, repeatedly intervened, in open letters, in support of the nationalist side.<sup>1</sup> More recently, the minister of war was shown to have been directly concerned in negotiating for war munitions in Russia. But the naïve tactlessness of the president's interventions made them regrettable chiefly to his own party; and the serious menace of the militarist plot ceased with its public exposure. Troops of young men in steel helmets march and counter-march in preparation for the future war of revenge. But an intended national demonstration of their forces, in May 1927, proved a fiasco; and the final passing, on 17 May, with nationalist concurrence, of a bill in which monarchy is abolished, vindicates once more the powers that make for stability in the still difficult equipoise of the German republic.

In this massive power of resistance we must recognize a first aspect of her post-war mind in politics. The political mind of the new Germany is clearly distinguishable from that of the generation which, if with less docility than is often thought, yet did on the whole prove malleable in the giant hands of Bismarck. And

<sup>1</sup> In particular his letter on the eve of the Volks-Entscheid, June 1926, and that of January 1927, calling on Marx to form a ministry of the bourgeois parties.

she has done much more than resist attack. Bülow's *politischer Esel* has handled the new instrument of autonomous government under the overwhelming difficulties of the post-war and post-peace situation, not without grave errors certainly, but on the whole with singular discretion and tact, and once at least, in the Locarno pact, with a magnificent surrender of national to European interests such as not one of the Allies has even affected to approach. The constitution of 1919 was a piece of bold constructive legislation, which has stood both the terrific shock of the Versailles treaty and six years of unexampled stress. By that instrument Germany renounced, explicitly or implicitly, autocracy and militarism, and the unqualified national egoism of the imperial régime.

It is easy certainly to discover in the private life of the nation, in its industry, its art, its literature, symptoms which bore more equivocal witness to the health and vitality of Germany's post-war mind. Years of inanition, of irregular employment, of insecure existence, of moral slackening, had taken their toll in character, in quality of brain and hand. For some time after the war German manufacture declined month by month both in execution and in output. 'We produce nothing now but what is cheap and easy,' complained Walther Rathenau bitterly in 1920.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, invention in the industrial arts had never been more fertile or resourceful than in this time of extreme need. In post-war literature and art a febrile brilliancy has been similarly but more intimately associated with a failure of nerve and stamina.

But if we look beyond these partial and passing phenomena, a more vital and significant fact emerges. The German people was, under new forms and conditions, recovering the liberty to be itself. It was in some important ways resuming a past with which it had lost

<sup>1</sup> *The New Society.*

touch. Poor and spare-living, relieved of empire, of militarism, and of the banal sumptuousness of a court, it was thrown back upon the enduring values and virtues of German civilization, patient resource, genius for order, and faith in the power of mind. And it was precisely these enduring values and virtues which, by the momentum of their persistence, enabled the nation successfully to resist the scarcely paralleled onset of forces making for its disintegration. What then were the constituents of this specifically German *Kultur* whose inherited efficiency thus contributed so largely to the stability both of Germany's post-war polity and of her post-war mind?

### III

First, Administration. Germany was the first state to carry out consistently the idea that good government demands a highly trained and educated civil service. Her civil administrators have not been exempt from the customary failings of bureaucracy; they have often been harsh and unsympathetic; but they were incorruptible; they understood the technique of government; and the best of them were living illustrations of the great saying of Goethe that the only way to possess freedom is by the daily doing of duty. To do full justice, however, to the quality of German administration we must look to the City; for the German city, and particularly the provincial capitals, as well of course as quasi-republics, like Hamburg and Bremen, enjoy a power and freedom of self-government much beyond that of any English city; and it was well known before the war how high a level of efficient organization, under the guidance of enlightened and progressive Bürgermeisters, very many of them had reached. German administration undoubtedly lost something of its efficiency and even of its integrity under the terrible strain of the first post-war years. Impoverishment and inanition lowered executive quality,

party passion not seldom warped the justice of the courts. But the great traditions of a profession are not easily overborne, and the steady functioning of the highly articulated machine of government in the hands of highly trained civil servants has powerfully contributed to the gradual recovery of the country.

Secondly, what may comprehensively be called Technology: the application of science, especially chemistry, to industry, which had before the war built up new industries of German invention, and transferred to Germany entire industries founded on discoveries made elsewhere. We need not overstress the sensational achievements of a Stinnes in making huge fortunes, even on the morrow of the armistice, by adroit manipulation of capitalistic groups. Underlying such successes, and a more durable factor in them than mere financial cunning, was the mastery of industrial technique based upon elaborate scientific equipment. Thus it was that Walther Rathenau, equally eminent in business and in politics, began his career with a notable discovery in the chemical laboratory. In this field German Kultur operates at once with sustaining and with creative power, as acquired momentum and as initiating energy, nourished by the inexhaustible resource and patience of the German mind.

Thirdly, organized 'culture' in the narrower sense; including the elaborate provision for education in the public schools, for scholarship and research in the universities, for music and drama in state and civic theatres and opera-houses.

In each of these aspects of civilization, applied to the full compass of national life, Germany before the war stood, and probably still stands, first. In each, if not a pioneer, she may claim to have bettered all precedent, and what she did not invent she carried out with a thoroughness which gave it a new meaning for national life. Each has an eventful history in pre-war Germany,

of longer or more recent date. The first is the creation of the Prussia of Stein and Hardenberg; the second of the Germany of Bismarck; the third has its roots in the later Middle Ages, but owes most of its immense resilient and recuperative power to the structural and spiritual renascence which evolved the first. No effectual study of the demeanour of post-war Germany can neglect these determining antecedents. In the present fragmentary sketch it is possible to touch only upon the most vital passages in the history of a single section of the third.

Universal education was a corollary of Protestantism, and the country of Luther was the first to reach it. The stubborn Germanic faith in the worth of the individual spirit which, three centuries after Luther, impelled the Tory Wordsworth to his demand in the *Excursion* that every English child should be taught, was at work long before in obscure little German states of the seventeenth century. Amid the turmoil and devastation of the Thirty Years War, State governments were laying down the principle of compulsory school attendance as a civic duty.<sup>x</sup> In the middle of the eighteenth century Germany acclaimed with rapture the educational gospel of Rousseau, and Kant evolved under the impact of Rousseau's individualism his own great doctrine that every human being is to be treated as an end, and never as a means. When the catastrophe of Jena destroyed the Prussian state, the building up of the German nation out of the ruins became the supremely urgent need. In another country such a catastrophe might have swept away all spiritual ideals in order to produce a maximum of drilled battalions. But Fichte and Stein and Hardenberg did not so conceive their task. They meant to fashion a state outwardly strong and capable of resisting any attack by military power. But they knew that that outward strength must be based upon internal coher-

<sup>x</sup> Sir M. Sadler in *Germany in the Nineteenth Century: Education*, p. 107 (Manchester Univ. Press, 1913).

ence, upon the individual quality of its citizens, and their opportunity for free development within the limits of law. Hence the most immediate and direct outcome of Fichte's famous lectures was not the building of barracks but the founding, in 1810, of the University of Berlin, followed within the next ten years by those of Breslau and Bonn. Nor was it only the higher stages of culture that were to be pursued, or the *élite* of the nation's manhood that was to be allowed the sole privilege of pursuing it. Precisely that belief in the universal capacity for, and right to, intellectual life inspired an equally thoroughgoing provision for elementary and secondary schools. Pestalozzi's plans for the educational unfolding of the child led up to Fichte's scheme for the preparation of the future citizen. Opportunity for the highest education was open to all, but there was no degradation of educational ideals to the lowest common measure. The Gymnasia gave, as they have ever since given, a secondary education nowhere surpassed in range or strenuousness. Technical schools were founded, which were to play a vitally important part in the technological development already noticed. For other kinds of specialized capacity opportunities of training were provided or imposed. The service of the state, the administration of a city, could only be undertaken after an elaborate and exacting course of study. And before these special preliminary studies could be entered on, a university standard of culture had to be attained. A man's soul, in short had to fulfil itself, before he could be permitted to specialize as a citizen, and as the condition of his becoming a truer citizen when he did.

#### IV

How then was this wonderful educational organism affected by the catastrophe of 1918 and the events which preceded and followed it? How did it stand the terrific double test,—the drain upon its manhood, the

attenuation of its natural resources? Of the two million Germans who fell, a far larger proportion than with us was drawn from the students and the younger professioriate of the universities. When the war was over ruin fell most grievously upon precisely that cultivated middle class from whose homes the scholars, lawyers, physicians, and clergy of the next generation would normally have been drawn. The enormous cost of printing, paper, binding, handicapped all publication of research, restricted the number, the compass, and the circulation, of the host of learned reviews.

Nevertheless, decay or decline is the last word that will occur to any observer of the German universities since the war. Suffering, scanty means, spare diet, do not necessarily mean, in things of the mind, diminished vitality. A century ago Germany was still a poor country, and Carlyle could contrast the fastidious, leisurely scholarship of Oxford with Heyne working fourteen hours a day in a garret at his edition of Virgil. The old Stoicism, the old resourcefulness, were not effaced by a generation or two of easier conditions. Some aid flowed in from England and America for the struggling university students, but this was trifling compared to what Germany herself did and to what the universities and the students did for themselves. No more than reference can here be made to the large-scale provision of meals at cost price, to such moving but typical stories as that of the Hamburg students who spent the morning from six to two in the heavy and dirty toil of unloading oil ships in the harbour, in order to attend lectures at the university from three to six.

And if we look to the actual output of German scholarship, one must measure by a high standard indeed to find it, in the departments of which the present writer can judge, inferior save in bulk. Fewer dissertations doubtless are printed, but the intellectual atmosphere is alive with ideas, and the stream of *Zeitschriften*

continues to flow on with vigour, at least, unabated. Some departments of learning, such as archaeology, suffered by the virtual exclusion of German scholars from many sources of new material. Her Egyptologists and Assyriologists could no longer excavate on the spot. The German school of Athens, where Dörpfeld had for a generation worked at the constructive interpretation of the Acropolis, was only after much delay re-opened, and intimate relations with the English school there remained still longer in abeyance.<sup>1</sup> Worse than this, the fine international comity of scholars, which before the war had put French or English drawings or casts at the service of German colleagues, and vice versa, was, with rare exceptions, for the time at an end. But the immense treasures of the German libraries, public and private, remained, and the task of constructing and re-interpreting the past, in which each generation has to continue or revise the work of its predecessors, called as imperiously as ever on the masters of historical science. Some of these masters had shared the war fury to the full; and ever and anon it still blazed out. But they could put aside these distracting memories, and with something of the sublime detachment of the East, in Arnold's poem, 'let the legions thunder past and plunge in thought again'. And if most of them were passionate nationalists, their chosen subjects reflected the cosmopolitan impartiality of science herself. Davidsohn continued his great monograph on the history of Florence, with yet more elaboration of critical method than his countryman Gregorovius had bestowed, a generation before, on the history of the city of Rome. In every quarter of the land the babel of erudite discussion of the Bible and its problems continued with little abatement.

<sup>1</sup> The old comradeship of their heads was, however, early resumed. One of the earlier steps to renewed intercourse was taken in 1919-20 by a student of the English school, who had introductions to a distinguished Berlin scholar at the German school.

In the capital, where the limbs of the embryo republic were being slowly and tentatively moulded, Eduard Meyer and U. v. Wilamovitz, Hans Delbrück, Adolf Harnack and Alois Brandl, who had all signed the famous manifesto of the ninety-three Intellectuals in 1914, were now engaged in enriching scholarship with less transient contributions to our knowledge of the history of the ancient world, or of the art of war, the Acts of the Apostles, or the work of Shakespeare. Still greater power of detachment was shown when Germany's recent enemies and conquerors were subjected, even it might seem with a special predilection, to the limelight of a relatively objective and dispassionate historical study. The history and institutions of England, in particular, were surveyed and scrutinized with keen and often admiring interest, as if to discover the secret of the strength which had made the little island in the North Sea so inexplicably formidable. One young historian examined in a massive volume the relations of English Puritanism to the classical learning of Humanism.<sup>1</sup> Another traced the gradual transformation of Protestantism in its relations to literature in the English eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> And a distinguished Berlin professor, who during the war discharged the duties of censor of letters there, has published a comprehensive and elaborately documented treatise on the polity and civilization of England as a whole, which promises to become a classic on both sides of the North Sea.<sup>3</sup> More recently, in a brilliant but slighter *aperçu*, Karl Wildhagen has diagnosed the 'natural and historical foundations of the English national character', which he discovers to be impulse and will.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Schirmer, *Puritanismus und Renaissance*.

<sup>2</sup> H. Schöffler, *Protestantismus und Litteratur*, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> W. Dibelius, *England*, 2 vols.

<sup>4</sup> K. Wildhagen, *Die . . . Grundlagen des engl. Volkscharakters*, 1925. A more directly comparative study is G. Lüdermann's *Ent-*

But it would give a very inadequate notion of the fertility of the post-war universities—even in the historical sciences alone—if we mentioned only specialist monographs on particular fields, however vast. The deepest and most masterful instinct of the German scientific brain is not specialism, in the sense of the minute investigation of a limited field. It is the intimate alliance of the gift of specialism with the gift for synthesis; of the eye which sees with precision every detail in a restricted field with that which presents masses of apparently alien fact in illuminating relation. We need but recall some of the giants of German scholarship, not one of them without this organic union of faculties; Jakob Grimm, equally a master of folklore, philology, folk-tales and primitive law; Lachmann, revolutionizing single-handed the study both of the Nibelungen and of Lucretius; Wellhausen, overthrowing the traditional and now obsolete view of the Old Testament, and confounding its supporters because he knew not only Hebrew, as they did, but all the Semitic languages and Egyptology; Lotze, welding metaphysic and science together in a new 'microcosm of Nature and Spirit'. Nor has this fruitful union of specialism and synthesis grown obsolete in the German scholarship of our time. Two great scholars and thinkers, one of whom died only the other day, have transformed both the theory and the conclusions of sociological history by bringing politics, morals, art, science, economics, religion—so often treated as autonomous and self-sufficing domains—into illuminating contiguity, and eliciting those profound affinities and responses which in reality interpenetrate human society. The older of the two, Max Weber, who died shortly before the war, inherited from Karl Marx the recognition that history

*gegengesetzte Denk-Welten*, eine philosophisch-politische Studie über d. grundsätzliche Verschiedenheit der engl. u. deutschen Denkart (Halle, 1925).

can be explained neither by the evolution of ideas, as Hegel believed, nor by the play of political forces, but that the rise and fall of states was sometimes conditioned by man's hunger and greed. Thus he showed how the greatness and decline of Rome is illuminated by the history of her land tenure and of her towns. But he did not, like Marx, find in man's hunger the solution to the entire evolution of his past. His rich mind was sensitive to spiritual as well as economic values; he re-thought the thought of Hegel as of Marx in ways of his own and with enormously enhanced material. And his ultimate aim was to justify the belief, of which he never lost hold, that mind is the ultimate and underlying fact in history, because purpose, even to win a livelihood, is itself a form of reason.

The younger of the two, Ernst Troeltsch, is probably the most impressive figure in the post-war world of German learning and thought. Unlike Weber, he approached sociological history from the side of religion, beginning his career as a Protestant clergyman. Religion, he wrote in the fascinating autobiographical retrospect, prefixed to his latest work,<sup>1</sup> 'Religion was my first love'; and he looked to it as the ultimate goal of his thought. But if religion was the supreme problem, it was only one factor in the complex evolution of society; and the task of interpreting this evolution, and the incessant resulting creation of new values, economic and spiritual, became his central preoccupation. Protestant orthodoxy was soon too narrow for him; he resigned his orders, played a dominant part in the Senate of Baden, and when appointed professor, during the war, at Berlin, joined the Philosophical, not the Theological faculty. He seized eagerly upon the work of Marx and Weber,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Meine Bücher*, introd. to *Historismus*, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> For the relation between the work of Weber and Troeltsch, see the latter's penetrating appreciation and criticism of the former in his *Historismus*, p. 367 f.

saw at once that the history of Christian doctrine cannot be explained, as Harnack sought to do, from within theology, by the impact of theological forces and influences alone. As little could it be explained as a conflict of spiritual truth with the passions and blindness of 'the world'. For Troeltsch's large social vision 'the world' with its hunger, its ambitions, its secular arduous and idealisms, had a law, an ethic of its own, which could claim to be weighed and valued along with the ethic of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> More than that, these two ethics, the secular and the religious, had not grown up in isolation, but each had, in the historic upbuilding of modern society, penetrated and moulded the other. To trace this process was the task attempted in his epoch-making book, *The Social Bases of the Christian Churches*. There is no question here of resolving the progress of Christianity into the pressure of worldly interests. But just as the early Church had to provide for its needs as well as for its teaching, so all through its later history dogma reacts upon the customs and the ethic of secular society, and is itself reacted upon by these. The relief of the poor is an accepted Christian duty, but pure Christianity seeks rather to idealize their condition than to relieve it. The financial vigour and success of many devout Englishmen is apt in the eyes of foreign observers to convict them of hypocrisy. But Troeltsch, after Weber, finds in modern Capitalism the direct product of Puritanism, its strenuous and ascetic genius creating industrial England with one hand, and destroying 'merry England' with the other.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was not for nothing that he described his ideal as 'thought saturated with reality' (*wirklichkeitsgesättigtes Denken*); or that he contributed a series of powerful letters, as an 'onlooker' (*Spektatorbriefe*), to the discussion of the war.

<sup>2</sup> The Weber-Troeltsch account of the matter has, however, been lately shown by Mr. R. H. Tawney to rest upon too simple an analysis of Puritanism. 'The heart of man holds mysteries of contradiction, which live in vigorous incompatibility together. There were different

I have dwelt upon the work of this great scholar and thinker, not only because of interesting side-lights such as these upon our own history, nor because of the deep interest he has excited in England—he was about to give a course of lectures here, in response to a pressing invitation, at the moment of his death early in 1923; but because, with Weber and Simmel, he stands out as the most expressive embodiment of the modern German spirit in the interpretation of man and the world, and of those deeper strains in the mind of contemporary Germany which the present essay seeks to define. That Troeltsch never reached finality—he died at fifty-seven—may make his works less satisfactory as text-books (which they were never meant to be), but it makes him only the truer example of the German spirit. He wrestled, like Faust, with fundamental problems which ceaselessly solicited him but which he never conclusively solved. To discover the inner bond which holds the world together (*'Dass ich erkenne was die Welt im innersten zusammenhält'*) was the problem that tormented Faust. The riddle which the whole import of his own life-work forced incessantly upon Troeltsch was how to reconcile religion and history; the absolute values which faith postulates, with the relativity involved in an evolutionary process, where every successive phase embodies some element of truth.<sup>1</sup>

elements in the Puritan spirit: a sober prudence which would gather the fruits of this world, and a divine recklessness which would make all things new': *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 212.

<sup>1</sup> This dilemma was already implicit in his *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte*, 1902. 'Das Buch', he wrote in 1923, 'ist der Keim alles weiteren' (*Meine Bücher*). The tentative solution which he had reached at the end of his life is given in the lectures which he was to have delivered here. 'The stream of historical life (with its ceaseless change) may be dammed and controlled from two sides: Firstly, by the morality of individual conscience, which for us Europeans is founded upon Stoic-Christian ideas, and leads to the idea of the Rights of Man, Humanity, and the duty of Solidarity, . . . and secondly, by the ethic of cultural values, which for us Europeans is most

## 24 THE MIND OF POST-WAR GERMANY

The career of Ernst Troeltsch, upon which I have deliberately lingered, was no isolated phenomenon, even in the war and post-war years of Germany. If he was the most eminent worker in his field, and had few equals among contemporary scholars in any country, his mind, his life, his ideals, and it must be added his thought-packed and difficult writing were in the great tradition of German scholarship. The authority of that tradition the war and its sequel, gravely as they have embarrassed its upholders, have as yet done nothing to impair. In this domain, at least, the great catastrophe which withdrew from Germany's grasp the ephemeral signs and splendours of empire had only emphasized her inalienable possession of some eternal things. The tramp of soldiers is silent in the spacious linden avenue upon which faces her leading university, now barely 120 years old; the royal palace opposite is a museum. But you pass through the university gates into a quiet quadrangle, an academic grove cool with the shade of trees which have only grown ampler during the years of conflict; hard by stands the statue of Hegel, symbol if we will of the discarded dreams of absolutism and the shattered Prussian state, but also of the unresting intellectual passion which takes all knowledge for its province, and of the unconquerable power and daring of human thought. Yet of that intellectual passion, of that daring human thought, even those illustrious interpreters of the evolution of history may one day be held less impressive examples than another Berlin worker in a widely different domain of knowledge—the man who has loosened time and space from their moorings, shown

decisively formed by Plato and the Neoplatonists.' I quote the lucid summary of Baron v. Hügel in his Introduction to the translation of these lectures. How deeply Troeltsch's mind was penetrated by the apparent implications of 'historicity' is shown by his doctrine that truth itself is 'polymorphous'. Cf. the interesting discussion of this by Professor C. Webb, in Needham's *Science, Religion, and Reality*, p. 336.

gravitation to be a corollary, and measured the compass of the universe ;—the man who not only refused to share the war fury himself, but for a moment at least, on the very morrow of the war, suspended it in others.<sup>1</sup>

## V

Such in outline were some of the stabilizing forces which post-war Germany derived from her inherited Kultur. But we should gravely misconceive her temper if we imagined that to be stable meant to be inert, or that millions who rejected and resisted revolutionary violence did not dream ardently of transforming change. The constitution worked out at Weimar six months after the armistice provided a legal framework for the social structure which has till now withstood the terrific strain of the dictated Peace and its consequences. But it was a compromise, effected by give and take, which completely satisfied no party in the state. And no transformation of legal and social structure alone would have appeased the ferment in the host of eager and prolific brains which did not think in terms of politics at all—still so recent and unfamiliar a form of German experience—or of any merely external and material betterment of society. With a passion of idealism which is apt to excite only the ironical comments of the foreign observer, they declared, in an infinity of tones and accents, that the supreme need of the ruined fatherland was a spiritual renewal; a new birth of the German soul. The prayer uttered in the prefatory poem prefixed to Fritz Liebhard's Alsatian novel *Westmark* found response in thousands of hearts : 'The empire without a soul broke in fragments ; before the whole world we stand in shame. Now it is our place to build up out of

<sup>1</sup> As is well known, the English expeditions sent out in 1919 to test Einstein's theory of gravitation by observation of eclipse phenomena reported that the evidence confirmed it.

light an empire of the soul which cannot be shattered. Here, German youth, lies your path ! Give the new Germany a soul !<sup>1</sup>

No one knew better than the man who uttered that appeal that that 'path' to 'soul' was not more easy because the 'soulless' empire had fallen ; that the war which overthrew it had left moral wreckage as well as material ruin in its train ; and that if horror and indignation and hope had bred a quicker idealism in the finer spirits of 'German youth', licence and disillusion and the relaxation of moral standards had drawn others into lower depths of cynical degradation. Their voices were not always articulate. But it was with the idealists that the future of Germany lay.

We may distinguish two groups among them. M. Fernand Baldensperger, who has lately described with his customary brilliance and amplitude of research the 'movement of ideas' among the *émigrés* of the first French revolution, finds that the 'idea' which preoccupied them all, the re-making of France after their return, took two principal forms. One group ('Prophets of the Past'), like the Bourbons, thought only in terms of restoration ; the other thought in terms of reform. The German people was not, like the French *émigrés*, expatriated. But their *patria*, their national home, was none the less obscured and defaced, and a like cleavage divided the future of their dreams. In some it was shaped by memory and old-world pieties, in others by imagination and hope.

The first group corresponds roughly to that of the Nationalists in politics. It is not always the transient glories of the Reich that allure them. To many eyes the great creative age of German mind beacons across the intervening century, and the national uprising of her youth against Napoleon symbolizes the visionary Germanism of Fichte rather than the blood and iron of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Hewell-Thayer, *The Modern German Novel*.

Bismarck. 'The war has shown us where our spirit lies,' cries Dr. Hans Jaeger of Eisenach, as a preface to a flaming proclamation of what he calls 'the Gothic Mind in German poetry'.<sup>1</sup> 'The war had brought us again the consciousness of being deeply Gothic in heart and blood. It is not classical or French culture that inspires our truest and greatest work, but the spirit enshrined in Strassburg Minster and the Nibelungenlied.' It was a half-truth, which neither the mature Goethe nor Nietzsche would have accepted; but like other half-truths it could intoxicate and inflame the brain. The young Goethe had proclaimed it in his rapturous hymn of praise to that same minster of Strassburg, his essay *Of German Architecture*;<sup>2</sup> and at the beginning of the nineteenth century the German Romantic School founded a new art gospel upon the supremacy of the Gothic spirit. For Otto Spengler, whose *Ruin of the West* was the furore of the early twenties, 'the West' was not only Germanic but an embodiment of the soul of Faust. It was thus no accident that in 1920 and the following years a series of elaborate studies of Romanticism attested how keenly the call of that Gothic spirit of old Germany was 'felt in the heart and felt along the blood' in the tragic depression which followed the war.<sup>3</sup>

But the old Germany had less equivocal titles to renewed discipleship. I do not speak of the great musicians, nor of Goethe, for their supremacy was never in question. But she had also, in Leibniz, Kant, and Hegel, three of the supreme figures in the history of philosophy, almost the only modern thinkers worthy to be ranked with, or near, Plato and Aristotle. The 'return to Kant'

<sup>1</sup> 'Der gotische Geist in der deutschen Dichtung,' 1925.

<sup>2</sup> *Von deutscher Baukunst*, 1770.

<sup>3</sup> Strich, *Deutsche Klassik u. Romantik*, 1922; Nadler, *Die Berliner Romantik*, 1920; Körner, *Romantiker und Klassiker*, 1924; Tumarkin, *Die romanische Weltanschauung*, 1920; Stefanski, *Das Wesen der Romantik*, 1923.

had begun years before the war; but the later volumes of *Kant-Studien*, the organ of this movement, betray an intensified consciousness of the value of this immense asset of Germany and of the modern world. The universal genius of Leibniz is in a yet more peculiar sense a German asset; he, more than any other thinker, must rank as the metaphysical interpreter (though he wrote mainly in French and Latin) of the deepest instincts of the German mind—the union of individualism and totality, of the faith that the individual has infinite worth, which yet can only be realized by it as a member of a living organism. It is again no accident that the complete works of Leibniz are shortly to be edited by the Berlin Academy, his own creation.

## VI

It will be seen that the appeal to the past did not, in Germany, tell solely on the side of reaction. The reformer and the idealist also drew inspiration and support from history, and the cleavage between the two groups, between the advocates of restoration and of reform, was therefore less clear-cut than it had been among the less historically minded *émigrés* of France.

Some of Germany's greatest memories told not as reactionary but as revolutionary forces. They were too potent to engender mere emulation; they summoned, trumpet-tongued, in majestic verse and vibrating prose, to a national life redeemed from the idols of the Bismarckian Reich, to a richer and more powerful ideal of manhood, purged from the fetish of the servile state. Thus Goethe, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and Nietzsche at the end, polar opposites in cast of genius, helped alike to formulate the new ideals for the upbuilding of German character and the policy of the German state.

What, now, was the nature of these new ideals? They

were, in the first place, not simply aspirations for improvement in something already tolerably good ; they were based on a passionate repudiation of some vital constituent of the existing, or recently existing, order. And it will be clearest to group them on the lines of these repudiations.

First, in sharp antagonism to the first group, is the repudiation of the whole complex of ideas and passions embraced in the 'imperialism' of the fallen Reich : in particular, aggressive nationalism, and its accompaniments, racial arrogance and militarism. The repudiation of aggressive nationalism does not mean that every German does not bitterly resent the wrongs done by the Treaty, and subsequently, in Poland and Silesia : it does not mean a surrender of the hope of recovering them, or of the desire to make Germany again in outward things, as she is in inner, the equal of the other nations of the European comity. But it does mean, firstly, the adoption of international goodwill, of loyalty, not only to 'king and country', but to humanity ; the recognition that 'patriotism is not enough'—as the completion and crown of national citizenship, not as its contradiction. It may seem a small matter that in the section of the Constitution which deals with education, it is expressly laid down that school books must inculcate international goodwill no less than patriotic pride. That German school-books have been produced animated by a very different temper, especially towards France, is beyond doubt ; but it is much that they have not, like the venomous fare provided for French and Belgian school children, implicit or explicit government sanction. More impressive to us is perhaps the emphatic internationalism of those bodies of young men and women, of all creeds and ranks of society, who constitute what is known as the 'Movement of Youth'. Of this remarkable movement I shall say more later : I will here only mention one touching instance—the fund

collected among its members at the worst period of German impoverishment, and mostly from very slender purses, towards the restoration of ravaged France. And it is needless to recall once more the triumph of European over the national mind which dictated the offer now embodied in the Treaty of Locarno.

The second aspect of the reaction from imperialism is the abandonment of the arrogance of race ; the naïve idolatry of Teutonicism, which saw in the 'Germanic race' not only the ethnological basis of medieval and modern Europe, but the source of all the solid excellences of national character. This is at bottom a question of scientific fact, and the reaction has found its most important support in the workshop of science. The bible and text-book of this belief, before the war, was, as is well known, the work of an Englishman, whose brilliantly-written rhapsody of pseudo-science, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, used to be read aloud, we are told, with fervent admiration by the ex-Kaiser to his sons. It took the mind and heart not only of uninstructed Germany captive. But its own 'foundations', always unsound, have been shattered by German scholars since the war, and in the name not only of science but of internationalism. In particular I mention the remarkable recent book of Hertz—*Rasse und Kultur*, which riddles the whole conception of 'race' as an article of national faith and with it one of the chief provocatives of national animosity. Behind the important question of theory lies a yet more momentous question of action and practice. What Hertz and his school have done is not merely to demolish with the trumpet blast of ethnological science Chamberlain's paste-board Jericho of racial superstition. They have sapped the authority of one of the most dangerous of the illusions that lead to war ; and his book was dedicated, significantly, to the memory of Jaurès, the great Frenchman murdered in August 1914, like Rathenau eight years

later, by Chauvinists who could not forgive the man who did not share that illusion.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Germany's repudiation of national egoism, and of national racialism, had as its natural, if not necessary accompaniment, the repudiation of militarism. The naïve policy which thought to compel that repudiation by disarming her, while the rest of the world remained armed, notoriously made it far more difficult, by deeply wounding, together with her pride, her hope of security and her sense of justice. Nevertheless, the hope, widely entertained, of one day redressing her wrongs even by force, is not a return to the spirit of a Tirpitz or even of a Treitschke. Over a far wider area the overwhelming sufferings of the war, culminating in the final *débâcle* which rendered all those sufferings and all the magnificent pretensions which involved them, futile, have produced a profound abhorrence of war itself.

We shall presently hear how clear a cry rang out from poetry, even during the war, for human brotherhood—‘the word that eternally unites us,—Man’.<sup>2</sup> No less clearly rings the abhorrence of the ruin and savagery of war—the vehement demand ‘to annihilate the annihilation so that the healing power may unfold’.<sup>3</sup> It had begun long before the great war, and the menace of an armed Europe was nowhere more poignantly felt or uttered than in the country commonly regarded as the capital of militarism. The outbreak of war itself seemed to be received by the German people with a universal burst of enthusiasm. But not all the finer spirits shared

<sup>1</sup> Other happy signs of recovery, on both sides of the frontier, are the policy deliberately pursued by Professor Vermeil and others at Strasburg of making this frontier university a focus of French and German intellectual intercourse and mutual understanding, the foundation of the Paris review *Évolution*, and the international conference held at Paris on 20 January 1926, under the presidency of M. H. Lichtenberger, when Thomas Mann gave a luminous survey of German Kultur.

<sup>2</sup> Heynicke, *Freundschaft*.

<sup>3</sup> Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. xii.

that temper. This was what Franz Werfel, one of the most gifted of her contemporary poets, wrote on the Fourth of August 1914, in the chaotic images, abrupt phrases, and rhymeless verse of the new day: it is an outcry to 'Time':

Born on a tempest of false words,  
 Thy head wreathed about with idle thunder,  
 Sleepless with lying,  
 Girdled with deeds that were never done,  
 Boasting of sacrifices  
 Hateful and loathsome to heaven,  
 So marchest thou on, O Time,  
 Into the roaring Dream  
 Which God, with awful hands  
 Plucks from his slumber and casts away.<sup>1</sup>

'Cease', cries another—

Cease to call on the God who hears not!  
 Ye have not understood,  
 A little under-devil is ruling the world,  
 His servants are Unreason and Madness.<sup>2</sup>

More sustained and formidable assaults upon militarism were delivered in novels and dramas. Conspicuous among the former are the two 'war-novels' of Clara Viebig, *Das Rote Meer* and *Töchter der Hekuba*, powerful and moving pictures of the tragic background of the war in the sorrow and passion, crime and vice, of a Berlin suburb; Latzko's deliberately horrible exposure of war horrors in *Friedensgericht*; Leonhard Frank's *Der Mensch ist gut*; and Herbert von Eulenberg's *Der Bankrott Europas*.<sup>3</sup> In drama the most powerful anti-

<sup>1</sup> F. Werfel, *Der Krieg*. Werfel's Trilogy *Spiegelmensch* (1921), a Faustian picture of man's struggle with his lower nature, reflects the situation less directly, but in a more imaginative way, than most of the dramas noticed below. It is in any case one of the most remarkable dramas of the post-war period.

<sup>2</sup> A. Ehrenstein, *Der Kriegsgott*.

<sup>3</sup> An excellent account is given of those and other anti-war novels in Hewart-Thayer: *The Modern German Novel* (1924), ch. viii.

war voices were those of the now well-known trio, Ernst Toller, Georg Kaiser, and Fritz von Unruh. Toller's work has been in part translated and acted in England, and is well known here. Kaiser's lurid drama *Gas* is a grim *reductio ad absurdum* of war carried on, as it threatens to be in future, by scientific methods so deadly that they will destroy civilization itself. Unruh, who has also written a powerful series of war stories, *Opfergang*, is the least known but the most remarkable of the three; he is also the one who most forcibly illustrates the anti-militarist revulsion brought about in Germany by the war. For Kaiser and Toller are socialists, and the socialists had always as a party opposed militarism, and took part reluctantly or under protest in the Great War. But Unruh is a Prussian officer of noble birth, and composed before the war several plays inspired by the deepest reverence for the old Prussian spirit of loyalty to duty. 'As law is above the stars,' he wrote in his *Louis Ferdinand, Prince of Prussia* (1911), 'so above man stands Duty great and stern.' 'But what duty?' His experience as a commander in the rush upon France in 1914 tragically shattered his old faith, and gave him a new and totally different answer. In his one-act tragedy *Before the Decision*, he shows us in its pitiless horror what an invasion, carried out, not by a wild soldiery but with strict observance of military rules, really means. The central figure, a commanding officer of a German battalion, has, in compliance with them, to order the execution of a French village mayor and all the men of his household, some German soldiers having been found killed in the village. When his men enter the house, the wife has just been confined. After the execution the young officer goes out in fierce revulsion against the hideous perversion of Duty: 'Down with the lying gods!'<sup>1</sup> I can only refer to Unruh's more

<sup>1</sup> *Vor der Entscheidung*; cf. also Diebold, *Anarchie des Dramas*, on  
3337 F

comprehensive presentment of his thought in his Trilogy, still (1927) incomplete, which will lead us from the war-horror of the First Part, 'Das Geschlecht',<sup>1</sup> through the confused and ineffectual pullulation of the new humanity in a society still a prey to sensual and military lusts, depicted in the Second Part, 'Platz'. The yet unpublished Third, 'Dietrich', will presumably show us the Hamlet-like hero of the Second Part finally overcoming his doubts and united with Irene, the one pure and lofty spirit of peace, as Prometheus with Asia.

A similar revulsion is described by Ernst Toller in his piece entitled *Die Wandlung*, where a young sculptor, disgusted with his useless life as an artist, throws it up to go and fight in the African colonial war. But war experience brings his sculptor's hammer into use again, to shatter the statue of the Fatherland's military might. A more terrible picture of war revulsion is Toller's *Hinkemann*, the crippled soldier reduced to earn his bread by biting rats to death at a fair as 'the incarnation of German strength'.

## VII

Militarism, race-arrogance, imperialism, are unmistakable phenomena, and their repudiation is equally unmistakable. I turn, lastly, to a repudiation no less real, but less easy to limit or define: the revolt against what may be comprehensively called the spirit of mechanism. The term denotes, in general, the obstructive or inhibitory effect of rigid forms or traditional habits upon the spontaneous energies of life and thought. Of mechanism in this sense, the soldier, the school-Unruh's plays at large. A useful summary of his chief dramas is given by Engel in *Schneider's Bühnenführer*.

<sup>1</sup> According to the author's description quoted by Diebold, *u.s.*, Unruh has given a brief, vehement 'Confession' of his poetic faith in Edschmid's little collection *Schöpferische Confession* (*Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit*), 1919. Creation is for him the essence of life, faith its instrument, and the solidarity of humanity its end.

master, and the capitalist, with their characteristic ethos of discipline and system, had made German society, in emancipated eyes, a crying example. They saw there the mechanism of a rigid social order, the stiff middle-class conventions which Ibsen, fifty years before, had exposed in the remorseless mirror of his art ; the mechanism of an educational machinery meant not merely, like the divine Potter's, to 'give a bent', but to mould completely ; the mechanism, more literally, of the industrial machine which in Kaiser's drastic phrase makes money but uses up men. Or again, they saw the mechanism of the mind ; the dogmas of rigid mental habits inaccessible to influence and growth, characteristic of what Bergson calls the *closed man*.

Not every German who thus diagnosed his country's plight saw the remedy with the simple faith of the emancipator, or imagined that when 'the machine', in Mann's phrase was 'broken, the stifled soul would breathe free'. In the eyes of one German whose stern prognostic filled the entire country for a year with excited discussion, the German soul itself was stricken with decay and nearing its doom. Actually completed just before the war, in the hey-day of imperial pride, when 'ruin' was the last destiny that Germany imagined for herself, Oswald Spengler's book, *The Ruin of the West*, seemed like the writing on the wall to a people trembling on its verge. The more so as this was no sensational pamphlet, but a vast survey of universal history, imposing in its architectonic, in its sweep of imagination, in its immense and many-sided, if far from impeccable, learning. History, as here portrayed, was the development of four independent, but only partially contemporary civilizations, each with its regular sequence of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, its birth, maturity, and death. India, classic antiquity, the semitic Arabs and Jews, had long vanished or left only effete traces of themselves. And now the fourth and

latest, which he calls the Germanic because it began with the succession of the Germanic tribes to the Roman Empire of the west, was also verging on its close. It had been very glorious; for the soul of the West is identified with that Gothic soul towards which, as we saw, the new medieval Romantics were looking back with longing eyes. Its spring had created the Eddas, it had reached its summer culmination in the Gothic cathedrals, in Shakespeare; its autumn was still glorious, as the season of Goethe and the great idealists Kant and Hegel. The fundamental mark of the Germanic spirit (of the 'Soul of the West' therefore) was, for Spengler, the pursuit of the infinite, whether in the upward soaring of Gothic choirs, in Faustus's repudiation of the finite logic of the schools, or in Leibniz's infinitesimal calculus. But now, the 'soul of Faust' is flagging, and in decay. Its creative power is gone, it can only mechanize, observe a technique, follow regulations; its art, its science, its citizenship, its outlook upon the world, are permeated and controlled by mechanism. A materialist socialism has displaced the constructive philosophies. Spengler, it is true, refused to be called a pessimist,<sup>1</sup> as his title led those who had not read his book, and many who had, to suppose; but his last word was a kind of grim stoicism, the temper of a heroic but hopeless spirit confronting a welter of universal decay.

Spengler and his ideas faded swiftly into the background,<sup>2</sup> and it is needless here either to discuss these ideas, or to describe the storm of criticism which, after a moment of awed wonder, his book evoked. Many of the shafts struck home, for Spengler exercised his amazing gift of intuition, of comparison, of discovering analogies, with singularly little critical control, and it ran riot in the brilliant but often fantastic pages of his book.

<sup>1</sup> In his pamphlet, '*Pessimismus?*'

<sup>2</sup> But is still widely read. His first volume recently (1927) reached its 100th edition.

Specialists in every province of its encyclopaedic domain exposed errors and oversights without number in their particular spheres; metaphysicians, mathematicians, economists, the historians of politics, of religion, of art, of music, protested with various degrees of emphasis and of acerbity against his statements or his conclusions. But few of the weightier participants in the controversy withheld the admission that Spengler's colossal 'synthesis'<sup>1</sup> was the most imposing effort of its kind since Hegel, and nothing can deprive 'Spenglerismus' of its significance as a portent of the post-war German mind.<sup>x</sup>

Little of Spengler's 'Stoic' temper is to be detected in the crowd of lyric poets who utter in hectic chorus their repudiation of a mechanical social order, emphasized in most cases by a repudiation of rhythm and rhyme. In criticism of social conventions Ibsen may have led the way. But these explosive and chaotic singers never remind us of those inflexibly closed lips; and few of them have more of his genius than of his austere reticence. And if Ibsen might be called an anarchist in social morality, he was not an anarchist in art, but used for the exposure of the rottenness of society a marvellously perfected dramatic instrument; whereas most of the German moral anarchists, being anarchists in art as well, were handicapped by the imperfection of the self-made weapons they used. They reflected most faithfully, as one of them, Kurt Pinthus, says, the 'fermenting, chaotic, explosive' temper of the time. He has made an anthology of the poems of some two dozen of them,

<sup>1</sup> A valuable conspectus of the literature of 'Spenglerismus', which offers at the same time a kind of cross-section through the intellectual life of Germany in 1922, is M. Schroeter's *Der Streit um Spengler* (München, 1922). The *Preussische Jahrbücher* of May in the same year devoted an entire number to Spengler; several of the essays and reviews it contains are important and illuminating. In English there are short notices in Gooch's *Germany*, and by Weinel, *Hibbert Rev.*, January 1924.

which he calls 'The Twilight of Humanity', an expressive title. Not upon Germany alone, but upon Humanity, they saw the night descending ; and in that twilight of coming doom they trampled on the humanity of that past day and all it cherished. In its splendour, its boasted morality, in all morality, they saw only delusion and sham. 'In the luxuriant flower of civilization they smelt the reek of decay, and their prophetic eyes saw a hollow factitious culture and a social order propped up solely on mechanism and convention, and already in ruins.'<sup>1</sup> I shall not try to illustrate the crude directness with which these poets paint this moral slough, where sex throws aside its last veil. I will rather quote a few poignant lines which bring home to us the intensity with which some of them felt the tragedy of the night into which that deepening twilight was leading their country and mankind ; they are headed 'Gethsemane' :

All men are the Saviour.  
 In the twilight garden we all drink of the Cup.  
 Father, let it not be taken from us !  
 We are all of one love :  
 We are all deep woe.  
 Father, thy world is our Cross.  
 Let it not be taken from us !

Poetry of this type is called by the outside critic 'anarchic', but is entitled by its own practitioners 'Expressionismus'. 'Expressionism' is the opposite, not of what we call impressionism, but of naturalism. The expressionist artist was not in the least concerned to depict outward things as men in general see them, or even, like the impressionist, to translate into form some pregnant moment in his own experience of them. He sought only to utter his own glowing individual vision or impassioned intuition, using the forms and images of outward things merely as instruments of that utterance. He did not, however, conceive himself as a merely

<sup>1</sup> Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, p. x.

'subjective' poet. Rather, he claimed to see the world through an imagination which everywhere pierced to and disclosed its inner significance ; and he scornfully contrasted this transcendental universe laid bare in its eternal truth, with the merely momentary truth of impressionism and the merely surface truth of naturalism. 'For the piecemeal atomism of the impressionist', declares its eloquent exponent, Kasimir Edschmid, 'we have a great, all-embracing world-emotion. . . . The earth is a colossal landscape, given us by God. We have so to see it that it does not appear deformed. No one doubts that what appears to us the outer reality cannot be the truly real. Reality must be created by ourselves. The meaning of things, however, must be sought. We must not be satisfied with the believed, fancied, or observed fact. The image of the world must be received pure and unsullied. But that is only in ourselves. . . . Whenever a man has the root of things in his hand, if his fist has grip, then Expressionism comes about.'<sup>1</sup>

This ferment of transcendentalism in glowing temperaments held little promise of a severely cultured poetic form. And in fact we commonly find, in this expressionist poetry, an explosive chaotically-surging speech, mostly in brief lyrics which, as I have said, usually refuse rhyme and even rhythm, structure, continuity, and sequence. The expressionist drama cannot, as drama, dispense with plot. But its plots are usually of naked simplicity, brief, vehement, spasmodic. This does not exclude great diversities both of style and temperament in their dramatic speech. There is the cool platonist Kaiser, says Diebold in his powerful but hostile study, *Anarchy in the Drama*, and the nervously ecstatic Kornfeld, the theatre-film-like Hasenklever, the heavily moving von Unruh, the mocking cynic Sternheim, and the Catholic believer Sorge. These are

<sup>1</sup> *Ueber den Expressionismus in der Literatur* (Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit), based on a speech delivered in December 1917.

the strongest dramatists of to-day. 'What binds them together is the passion for inwardness.'

The socialists' crusade against capital, already adumbrated in *The Pillars of Society*, surges through Georg Kaiser's powerful and original drama, *Gas*. 'Gas' is the symbol of money, which industry, the machine, produces for the capitalist, while the men who work the machine are used up. The hero, son of a milliardaire, is engaged in manufacturing a gas more powerful than all known fuels. All the world runs wild after it. One day something goes wrong, there is a frightful explosion in which many lives are lost. The workmen strike, and the world's supply of gas threatens to run short. The milliardaire's son casts about for a solution. There was no flaw in the manufacturing process, the formula used was perfectly correct. Then the true solution flashes upon him. No, it was not the formula for the gas that was wrong, but the product, the gas itself. 'Away with the Machine, and discover Man ! The millions of men mechanically used up to produce it !' In this strange but impressive drama, the middle piece, in its two parts, of a tetralogy of social reform, Kaiser sounds the most strident note that the war with mechanism, as the enemy of life, has yet evoked. It was in prosecution of this war that Kaiser's fellow dramatist, Ernst Toller, made a drama of the story of our Nottingham machine-breakers, performed here not long ago. These Nottingham lace-machines were meant, like Kaiser's gas-works, as a symbol of the mechanism which devours and consumes man. And we easily understand how, in a whole group of these poets, the town itself, devouring the rural plain with its factories and workshops, should become a symbol of mechanism. So Armin T. Wegner declaims it the insatiable hunger of Towns, unchecked till they reach the mountain top, the sea beach, or till the germinating Earth has become 'one everlasting, unending Town'. In the same sense a more philosophic

spirit than Wegner or Toller and Kaiser, no social anarchist, but a travelled aristocrat, Count Keyserling, could sum up Chicago as the city in which mechanism was completely master of man. He tells us with appalling clearness what he means. 'It is not that the machine kills the man, but that it reduces all that is spiritual to material, all that is organic to mechanical, terms, by showing that without soul, cultural interests, or emotional cultivation, it is possible to live a full and busy life.'<sup>1</sup>

### VIII

In these sentences of Count Keyserling, vibrating with the passion for spiritual culture which later found expression in his Darmstadt 'School of Wisdom', we have a glimpse of the more ideal aspect of the revolution, hinted in many a chaotic utterance, but of which we must now notice the explicit signs. The rebels against mechanism and social routine often used the language of the libertine, but their libertinage was shot with idealism; and what seemed the naked effrontery of passion was often a fierce effort at self-liberation from a bondage of the soul. The poet-collector of the anthology mentioned above, *The Twilight of Humanity*, explains that the 'twilight', if it means primarily the twilight of decadence, the passing from day's splendour to the night of despair, in which their country seemed to be sinking, or sunk, means also the twilight which precedes the dawn of the new day; the deliverance of Man which Man himself can alone achieve.<sup>2</sup> It has been said, finely and profoundly, that chaos in Germany is never hopeless and unmitigated anarchy; it is a 'chaos that longs to be a Cosmos'—*ein Chaos das sich nach Cosmos sehnt.*

<sup>1</sup> Graf Hermann Keyserling, *Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen*, p. 613. With the justice of this diagnosis of Chicago we are not here concerned.

<sup>2</sup> Pinthus, *u.s.*, ix.

We must not seek in the chaotic ferment of these poets of the 'Twilight', whether they take it to be of the dawning or of the dying day, for more than the germs of such a Cosmos. But the germs are there. The passionate faith in love and brotherhood, which transfigures the world to their eyes, is not itself mirage. They know, too, that the spiritual revolution must begin within. Thus René Schickele :

What I would have the world be  
I must first be myself,  
And utterly and without constraint.  
I must become a ray of light,  
A clear water,  
And a fleckless Hand  
Held out to greet and to help.<sup>1</sup>

And Franz Werfel, more mystically :

All things *are* if thou lovest! . . .  
Heart, heart, how dost thou shape and make! . . .  
When thou soarest, Man, the world grows great,  
And when thou sinkest it grows desolate!  
Only the soul that loses itself in love  
Is of all the measure, and all measure above! <sup>2</sup>

The most remarkable and original manifestation of this impulse towards a new Cosmos of the spirit is that 'Youth-Movement' to which I have already referred; the more so as it suggests to the outsider rather a vindication of Chaos, so resolutely do many of its spokesmen denounce the social order of which they are heirs.<sup>3</sup> It extends to the youth of all classes, parties, and creeds. Among the proletariat workers, free-thinkers, evan-

<sup>1</sup> *Abschwur* (Pinthus, u.s., p. 269).

<sup>2</sup> *Das Mass der Dinge* (Pinthus, u.s., 270).

<sup>3</sup> The fullest account of the Jugendbewegung is that of Förster: *Jugendbewegung, Jugendseele, Jugendziel*. See also the succinct article in *Hibb. Journ.*, April 1924, by Dr. Meyrick Booth, and Gooch's excellent summary, *Germany*, p. 311 f.

gelicals, catholics, the keenest and most spirited young men and young women form new groups, each, while retaining the old name, seeking to build up a new life upon a variously simplified and spiritualized version of the traditional faith. The oldest of all, the nucleus of the entire movement, the 'Free-German' youth, is, as its name suggests, the freest from tradition; but while remaining definitely anti-Christian, it repudiates the free-thinker's idolatry of intelligence, as well as the neglect or abuse of the body. The 'Free Proletarian' youths have broken away from the materialism of Marx; they resolutely oppose the alcoholism and sexual decadence of the great cities. The 'Protestant Youth', more in touch than these with Christian tradition, pursue especially a mystical devotion to the person of Christ, but repudiate the dogmas and secular aims of the churches. While the much larger 'Catholic' group, with ramifications all over the land, seeks, according to its most authentic exponent, Förster, to reawaken the ancient soul of the German people, long buried beneath modern materialism and *Staatskultur*, and historically and psychologically nearer to Catholicism than to the superimposed teaching and institutions of Luther. What all these groups have in common is the religion of youth, and if they do not, any more than the adherents of the older faiths, interpret its dictates altogether in the same sense, their practice makes with immense preponderance for social service, sexual purity, class fraternity, and international goodwill.

The Youth Movement is likely to be dismissed by the practical Anglo-Saxon as a mere expression of puerile and impracticable impatience of the discipline of ordered life. Such a view is wholly inadequate. The Youth Movement has severed or loosened the more galling bonds which tied its members to the old society; but they are everywhere evolving new and more plastic modes of social cohesion. And that the new society thus

constituted cannot be ignored in any attempt to interpret the post-war German mind, may be judged from the emphatic testimony of one of its leaders: 'The whole moral outlook of the young people of Germany is incomparably better to-day (1924) than it was thirty years ago.'<sup>1</sup>

From the Youth Movement, an organized attempt to escape from the mechanism of modern German society, let us pass to two other movements which in different ways seek rather to grapple with the mechanism, and to turn the machinery which wears and crushes human life into the other machinery which furthers and upbuilds it.

The first, of which only the briefest mention can here be made, since its counterpart has been familiar to us in England since the closing decades of the last century, is the attempt to put education of university rank within reach of the people. But if England originated the 'university extension' movement, post-war Germany has carried it out, like some other English inventions, with a systematic thoroughness which we cannot yet rival. The foundation of 'People's Universities' (*Volks-hochschulen*) began only in 1918, mainly through the impulse of a single creative mind. In 1924 a 'Volkshochschule' was at work in every German town of 150,000 inhabitants or upwards.<sup>2</sup> The early promise of the movement has not been maintained, but a new educational organ has been created, which in a time of less iron struggle for existence may once more function with vigour.

The other movement has made less spectacular progress in a more formidable task. Its aim is to humanize labour under the capitalist system, by giving the worker more opportunity for self-determination and responsi-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Meyrick Booth, *u.s.*, p. 473.

<sup>2</sup> An excellent account of them is given by A. Picht (*Contemp. Rev.*, February 1924).

bility. The socialists had of course another solution for labour problems ; but though the strongest party in the new State, they were not a majority, and meanwhile the position of the workers grew worse. The great capitalists grew enormously in power and wealth, and were able to make largely ineffective the provisions of the constitution designed to put Labour and Capital on equal terms. It is at this point that the new group of progressive German economists and sociologists steps in, among whom may be named in particular Dr. Eugen Rosenstock, Professor of Law at Breslau. 'What,' he asks in his vigorous pamphlet 'Living Work in Industry' (*Lebensarbeit in der Industrie*, 1926), 'What if there had to be ordinances designed to do justice not only to the worker as he is, to his actual wants and needs, but to the worker as he is to be? ordinances which will set free his creative power, and hew the path to that liberation through his passion to create? Such ordinances would complete and crown our social policy and our labour legislation, by giving free play to the need for power and passion. Thus, in place of the need for 'protection' (secured by social legislation) and the need for political freedom (secured by labour legislation), there comes a need which is not even confined to the individual but, through the courage and vitality it inspires in him, redounds to the progress of the industry and thence of the nation at large.'

It is here, in fact, that we must look for one of the sources which promise most for the complete restoration of the German nation ; and for more than restoration, for its strength will be more fully based upon physical and moral health. The mechanization of industry is a disease from which no country is free ; but Germany's financial straits make reform at once more difficult and more urgent; and the very urgency is a stimulus to a crowd of eager and able brains to bring it about: 'Industry must recover by help of

intellectual power what it has lost in financial resources.'

It would be foreign to the present purpose to discuss the detail of the proposals made by Rosenstock and his colleagues. Enough, that they centre in the plan known in France as *commandite*, and already largely practised in French printing-works, by which a piece of work, instead of being distributed to the 'hands' by the employer, is handed over to the workers *en bloc*, who make themselves responsible for the execution, and themselves distribute the payment according to each man's performance. This plan, which restores to the workman responsibility and duty, was hailed by the union of German engineers in 1923 as the counterpart of the reforms by which Germany recovered her nationhood after the Napoleonic occupation. The comparison may be grandiose but is not meaningless. As the army of hired soldiers whom Napoleon destroyed at Jena was replaced by the embattled youth of Germany who overthrew him at Leipzig, so the German workman, becoming responsible, will learn to use his capacity to the full. In this willing and responsible, and not servile, service, the *Jugendbewegung*, which began as a mere revolt against the restraints of society and creed, may finally find the right solution of its needs, and at the same time bring about the spiritual emancipation of industry. 'If our young manhood takes this yoke upon itself,' concludes Dr. Rosenstock, 'the *Jugendbewegung* in the social order may in reality become that which a century ago the national army became for the state: the living stream whose tide, streaming through the lifeless mechanism of industry, may restore its forces and bring it to an effective action that will outlast the changing generations.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rosenstock, *u.s.*, p. 64.

## IX

Thus widespread was the revolt against mechanism in society and life, and thus manifold the effort to replenish and recreate 'the German soul'. It remains to glance, with a brevity still more inadequate to the scope and complexity of the phenomena, at the revolt against mechanism in the sphere of mind and thought. By this is meant the reaction, now extremely widespread in the intellectual centres, particularly among the younger professoriate of the universities, against those characteristics of modern German mentality which tend to atrophy or sterilize spiritual life: <sup>1</sup> the rigidity of a theological dogmatism inaccessible to fresh spiritual currents; the aridity of a scholarship punctilious in the search for 'sources' but scornful of spiritual values; the ego-centric hardness of a capitalism obsessed with the vision of material power. The reaction against all these forms of mechanized mentality began long before the war; it was the reply of the spiritual forces of Germany to the materialist and military idolatries of the empire. It gathered increased volume, naturally, with the empire's fall, and drew into its alliance men who were fighting for spiritual emancipation in other quarters and with other arms. Thus the exposure of capitalist mentality received powerful assistance from the historians of economics and religion, Weber and Troeltsch, who had traced the origin of capitalism, with its far-sighted abstention from present enjoyment for the sake of future benefit, to the Puritan's calculated asceticism in the interest of the salvation of his soul; contrasting both these types of the *homme clos* with the instinctive and emotional vitality of the early Christian, who refused 'usury' and was 'open' to all the winds of the spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the striking account of this movement in its various ramifications by Professor Gustav Hübner, of Königsberg, in *Hibbert Journal*, October 1924: 'The Present Mind of the German Universities'.

And as these Christian and historical assailants of capitalism sought their ideal in the economic socialism of the feudal clan or the medieval guild, they found themselves joining hands with the medievalists of the reaction who looked back with longing to medieval Christianity.

The reaction from mechanism in scholarship, again, found its chief inspiration in the work of the great philosophic critic and historian of literature, Wilhelm Dilthey (d. 1910), whose profound interpretations of poetic experience, in *Erlebnis und Dichtung*, opened a new way in the biography of poets ; and who himself looked back, like the Neo-Romantics, with the reverence of kindred genius, to the Grimms and other masters of humanity and scholarship in the early nineteenth century. And the historians Weber and Troeltsch themselves, who had thrown so much light on the psychology of economics, contributed, both in that way and by their rich and many-sided apprehension of the meaning of history, to discredit the fetish of a narrow specialism.

The great personality of Ernst Troeltsch meets us once more when we turn, thirdly, to the reaction against the mechanism of dogma. His life-long wrestling with the problem of the relativity of truth has been described above. But the thinkers chiefly in question here were more directly concerned with theology and religion. They did not necessarily reject the dogmas of orthodoxy. In some vigorous reforming movements, both on the Catholic and on the Evangelical side, these are strenuously asserted. But they approached them by other than purely ratiocinative processes. Mysticism, with its claim to an intuitive vision of God and communion with divine things, has always attracted minds of this type. And in the present century this attraction has been confirmed by the general discredit of 'intelligence' as an instrument in the discovery of truth, under

the influence especially of Nietzsche and Bergson. Two remarkable books, among others, both enormously popular, though not with quite the same audiences, owed much of their vogue to the wide diffusion of this changed temper. The one seemed to offer a new path to the inmost sanctuary of religious faith, exempt from the barren logomachy of the creeds. The other opened new horizons to multitudes eager for religion but impatient of its conventional formulations. Rudolf Otto's 'The Holy' (*Das Heilige*, 1922) sought, with an impressive combination of religious insight and intellectual address, to establish the reality and significance of something that we recognize as Holy, by basing this recognition upon our elemental intuitions of the 'awful' and the 'good'. Goethe had foreshadowed this approach to religion in his pregnant chapter on the threefold religion of reverence in *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre*.<sup>1</sup> The second book, Count Keyserling's *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* (1919), already mentioned, has far less pretence to psychological power, but is based upon a rich first-hand study of oriental, especially Indian mystic, religions. The philosophic Count whose verdict on Chicago was quoted above, left his Estonian seat, before the war, to find 'the way to himself' by what he said was the shortest route—'a voyage round the world'.<sup>2</sup> He made the voyage, but he had found himself, as he thought, long before the close, in willing surrender to the magic of India. India is the central theme of the 'Travel Diary', the ruling preoccupation of the 'philosopher'. Keyserling's India is indeed his own—an India in which the English are absolutely ignored, while the

<sup>1</sup> The kindred, but more definitely evangelical, book of F. Heiler, *Das Gebet*, 1918, was reviewed by Dean Inge in *Quart. Rev.*, 1923. Cf. Weinel, *ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> For a critical, if theologically biased, account of Keyserling's work, cf. R. Hüpfeld, *Graf K. Ein Vortrag* (Bonn, 1922). A more recent and more dispassionate account is given in two articles of the *Revue Germanique*, 1927.

web of Indian religious life, obscure, intricate, subtle, many-coloured, is unfolded before us in a brilliant half-visionary light. This book is indeed at bottom less a study of religious or other phenomena than, as Keyserling himself says, a 'poem', in which facts are introduced, not for their own sake, but as means of expressing a meaning with which they have nothing to do—an expressionist prose poem, in short. And this 'meaning' is not a doctrine but rather, as 'Nature' was for Wordsworth, or 'Imagination' for Blake, a well-spring of inspiring thought and feeling; not, in his own words, a theoretically-possible view of the universe, so much as a practically attainable state of mind;<sup>1</sup> a religion, in fact, disengaged from theology and ecclesiasticism, the spirit released from the doctrinal and institutional 'machine'.

Keyserling's book, though largely written before or during the war, was only published in 1919, and in spite of its bulk and difficulty sold by tens of thousands.<sup>2</sup> Multitudes of educated Germans, who had witnessed the collapse of the stupendous machine of empire, felt the fascination of religions founded upon a disdainful abnegation of the material world. Keyserling, it is true, did not preach any such fundamental renunciation. He was at bottom too European to embrace unreservedly the passive negations of oriental soul-culture. He had, moreover, returned from India by way of the States, and despite his horror of Chicago, found that American 'efficiency' and American 'New Thought' had something to teach. His Oriental mysticism received a Western embroidery. The German of the future was to become a purged and purified soul, but for the purpose ultimately of a purified and spiritualized citizenship.

The Estonian nobleman who had made the pilgrimage of the world 'to find himself' was not well equipped

<sup>1</sup> Keyserling, *u.s.*, Preface, p. xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Gooch, *Germany*, p. 324. More recently the *Indienfahrt* of Waldemar Bonsel has touched a like note and awakened a like response.

to become a leader of men or the founder of a religious sect. But he could not evade the implications of his own book. He had heralded a new faith, and loud and eager voices from many sides summoned him to show the way. Disciples flocked about him, and presently they organized themselves as a 'Society for Free Philosophy', meeting for training and conference in an Academy or 'School of Wisdom', at Darmstadt, and issuing a periodical 'The Lightbearer' (*Der Leuchter*). Keyserling, the actual 'bringer of the light', provided a manual called 'The Way to Perfection'. Here, with German strenuousness and method, the spirit of Indian mystic meditation was wooed, and Rabindranath Tagore, its finest flower, whom Keyserling had visited in Calcutta—('Never have I seen so much soul concentrated in a single man,' he wrote afterwards<sup>1</sup>)—came and lectured to the School. But Keyserling did not forget that he was training Germans, and for citizenship in the German state. Their soul-culture was to be no recluse-meditation upon eternity, but, like the meditation of Goethe, the instrument and accompaniment of action.<sup>2</sup> That Keyserling's practical efficacy appears to be almost negligible does not alter the significance of his aim.

And Keyserling was not the only prophet of a new faith who offered to the hungry German soul the vision of a spiritual perfection to be had without the entangling apparatus of traditional dogma. The Darmstadt School of Wisdom had a parallel at Dornach in Switzerland in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical Society, founded just before the war, and *The Way to Perfection* a counterpart in his *Threefold Commonwealth*, 1919. But a more powerful and original essay in the trans-

<sup>1</sup> Keyserling, *u.s.*, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> For the later career of Keyserling see Gooch, *u.s.*, p. 326 f., and Weinel, *u.s.*, and the two articles in the *Revue Germanique*, 1927, above mentioned.

fusion of the traditional spiritual values was Leopold Ziegler's 'Transformation of the Gods' (*Der Gestaltwandel der Götter*). This grandiose survey of the historic development of religion in the West is, like Spengler's more famous *Untergang*, an imposing intellectual fabric, reared to dizzy heights of speculation upon a basis of massive erudition. Both books are deeply stamped with the character of the German mind. Ziegler's theme recalls, and doubtless alludes to, the *Götterdämmerung* of Wagner: The reign of the old gods is over, Walhalla is in flames; but out of the ruin rise the deathless forms of Siegfried and Brynhild, symbols of immortal love. Ziegler, too, will save from the wreck of Christianity the precious mysteries which its genius conceived, but which remain after its passing, as instruments by which Man may realize the divine. 'Guilt and atonement, sacrifice and new birth, creation and redemption,—it is by these that Man, seeking to get beyond himself, wins apotheosis, even when he has long ceased to perceive gods above, without, or within him.' I am not here concerned with Ziegler's negations, but with his bold and impressive endeavour to save the ethical substance of the old faith; an endeavour the seeming futility of which may raise a smile, but which no one will deride who believes that the spirit of Christianity will remain, a deathless possession of humanity, whatever may be the destiny of its tradition or of its doctrine in the hands of the historian and of the philosopher.

## X

*Epilogue*

The ultimate drift of the mind of post-war Germany cannot be confidently gauged, much less summed up in a formula. We have been endeavouring, in the preceding pages to record some of the talk overheard at a vast national Symposium—a Symposium where the fellow-

guests, as in a modern banquet, sit at separate tables, and discourse often of different matters and in divergent keys, dialects and tempers. At some of the tables there is brawling ; at others abstruse and difficult argument ; at few, gaiety or sparkling jest. No Socrates has yet appeared, to interpret the final purport of the talk, and lift it to its authoritative and convincing climax. Perhaps he is among the guests, and his turn is not yet come.

In the meantime let us listen at the close to a few sentences of one who, if far enough from commanding the serene and assured sagacity of Socrates, had more perhaps of the visionary fire of the prophet than any of his contemporaries, and who met the prophet's reward. Walter Rathenau has already been mentioned (§ III), but the outlines of his career may be briefly recalled. Born into wealth and power as the son of a great industrialist, he early showed the qualities of brain and character which use these advantages as a lever for enterprise, not as a pretext for luxury or indolence. By study in German, Swiss, and French universities, and then by travel in America, South Africa, and Russia, he won a rich equipment of sociological culture and observation invaluable to a nation-builder. Entering industry after his return, he soon displayed a mastery both of technological science and of business organization which led to his appointment as sole director of the greatest of German electricity concerns, the 'A.E.G.' But the man who now stood almost on the pinnacle of the German industrial world was also an ardent idealist, who bitterly felt the price which was being exacted from German labour for the booming success of capital. His first book was in substance as in title a 'criticism of the time'.<sup>1</sup> In the soulless labour of the millions who worked that exquisitely elaborated machinery he saw an enslavement of the spirit to mechanism, an enslave-

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Kritik der Zeit* (1912).

ment in no wise redeemed by the profusion of resulting dividends which maintained a growing class of profiteers in affluent idleness. No socialist, he yet believed with the socialists that no society is healthy in which there is either a proletariat or a parasite ; but his final measure of social health was not economic at all : the end of society was the development of soul.

The war only changed the current of Rathenau's gigantic activities. He had opposed its inception ; but his organizing power was recognized by his appointment as first director of the Raw Material department. In the height of the crisis he found time to launch a plan directed to the elimination of the proletariat condition, —in his book *Of Things that are Coming* (1917). The Revolution was at once too chaotic and too incomplete to satisfy him. Deeply aware of the weaknesses of the German state, of the hollowness of the imperialism and militarism which for a hundred years had diverted the German people from its true goal, and had now brought it to unprecedented disaster, he yet saw in the republican society which took its place only anarchical forces let loose, the demoralization of a people released from restraint, and reckless with want and despair.

He scorned the claim that the German people had effected its own revolution. 'It is not we who liberated ourselves : it was the enemy ; it was our destruction that set us free.' In the compromise-constitution of Weimar he saw only a wretched 'idea-less' fabrication. But he believed profoundly in the final recovery of the German people. It was not the war only that it had to recover from. It was that hundred years' alienation from itself. 'We are endowed as no other people is for a mission of the spirit. Such a mission was ours till a century ago : we renounced it because through political slackness of will-power we fell out of step ; we did not keep pace with the other nations in internal political development, but devoted ourselves to the most far-reaching mechani-

cal developments, and to their counterpart in bids for power. It was Faust, lured from his true path, cast off by the Earth-spirit, astray among witches, brawlers, and alchemists.

'But the Faust-soul of Germany is not dead. Of all peoples on the earth we alone have never ceased' to struggle with ourselves. And not only with ourselves, but with our *dæmon*, and God. We still hear within ourselves the All; we still expand in every breath of creation. We understand the language of things, of men, and of peoples. We measure everything by itself, not by us; . . . We are all alike and yet all different; each of us is a wanderer, a brooder, a seeker. Things of the spirit are taken seriously by us; we do not make them serve our lives, we serve their life with ours.'

"And you dare to say this", interrupts a supposed hearer, "in the face of all the bemiring and brutalizing that we experience—the profiteering and gourmandizing, the abject submissiveness, the shameless desertions, the apathy, the insincerity, the heartlessness and mindlessness of our day?" Yes, I dare to say it, for I believe it and I know it.<sup>1</sup> And so, he concludes the last and ripest statement of his views: 'Only on Thoughts and Ideals can our existence be staked. We can and must live by becoming what we were designed to be, what we were about to be, what we failed to become: a people of the Spirit, the Spirit among the peoples of mankind.'<sup>2</sup>

It was the originality and the greatness of Rathenau that this profound faith was not the subterfuge of a dreamer but the animating assurance of a mind incessantly occupied with the working out of his country's salvation in the complex detail of political and economic action. He thought synthetically and on a vast scale. The individualism of which we boast in England—'every man for himself'—was wholly foreign to him, frankly as he recognized the greatness of England's

<sup>1</sup> *The New Society*, p. 98 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

economic achievement. But so was socialism, which after dividing the whole wealth of the country among its citizens would leave each a proletarian. What he envisaged was a national control of industry, by the unification and standardization of the whole of German industry and commerce in one great Trust, working under a state charter. This was described at large in his *New Economics* (1918).<sup>1</sup> And his brilliant powers of dealing with political as well as economic facts were finally recognized by the republic of which he hoped so little, when he was called in to be Minister of Reconstruction and then, in April 1922, Foreign Minister. In this capacity he went to the Genoa Conference as an apostle of peace and reconciliation, and no German statesman had yet impressed his Ally hearers as this man of genius impressed Mr. Lloyd George and M. Barthou, neither of them even approximately his equal in range of culture or in weight of mind. His position was the stronger because he was convinced that the Treaty of Versailles, which he was now discussing over a council-board with its authors or sponsors, must perish of itself, since it was founded on hate. But his conclusion at the same moment of the Treaty of Rapallo with Russia was an anticipation of the future too daring for ordinary judgements, and his mission to Genoa at once broke down. Then the baser passions that in those early days of the republic lay in wait for unpopular greatness came out of their lurking places, and in June 1922, the most gifted, far-sighted, and high-minded of living German statesmen fell before the bullet of anti-semitic assassins.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The New Society*, p. 37 n.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to an intimate friend, recently published, Rathenau vindicates his claim to be a German. 'I have and know none but German blood, no people but the German. If I am driven from my German home, I remain German and it alters nothing. You speak of my blood and race, meaning the Jewish. With the Jews I have no bond but that which all Germans share, the Bible, memory, and

In one of his keen and remorseless analyses of his country's mentality, Rathenau declares that the German mind is without the power of creating forms, but has eminently the power of filling the forms it finds, or inherits, or takes over, with a richer content. And, it may be that Rathenau himself, overflowing with ideas as he was, and inexhaustible in schemes for helping his stricken country out of the morass, was less eminent than some others in the clear-cut thinking which gives structure to intellectual creation. But he had in extraordinary measure the wealth of mind, the quickness of heart and sense, the acuteness and comprehensiveness of imagination which make whatever is abstract, concrete and human and positive ; which bring philosophy from the clouds to the service of the state and the factory and the home, and yet leave unimpaired the winged power which sees all things with larger, other eyes than ours. And in that union of opposite gifts, rare in this degree, yet deeply grounded in the mentality of her people, lies the hope of Germany in the future.

the formation of the Old and New Testament' (to W. Schwaner, 23 January 1916). A collection of Rathenau's letters from all periods of his life has recently been published by his mother.

## DANTE AND MILTON

Introduction, p. 58. § 1. The young Dante : *Vita Nuova*, p. 60.  
§ 2. The young Milton : *Comus*, p. 66. § 3. Dante the Statesman : *De Monarchia*, p. 74. § 4. Milton the Statesman : *Defensio Secunda*, p. 82. § 5. Political Failure : *Tre Donne* and *Samson Agonistes*, p. 87.  
§ 6. The *Commedia* and *Paradise Lost*, i, Hell, p. 92. § 7. The *Commedia* and *Paradise Lost*, ii, Heaven, p. 99. § 8. The *Commedia* and *Paradise Lost*, iii, Their Purpose, p. 105. § 9. Dante and Milton, p. 111.

Nessun meggiore dolore  
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
Nella miseria. *Inferno*, v. 121.

E la sua voluntade è nostra pace:  
Ella è quel mare, al qual tutto si move  
Ciò ch'ella crea e che natura face. *Paradiso*, iii. 85.

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.

*Samson Agonistes*, 1721.

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

*Paradise Lost*, i. 254.

EVERY one knows these sayings ; they are among the most familiar, and the most treasured, in modern poetry. In each of them there is an indefinable greatness. Each bears the stamp of a mind that has felt deeply, powerfully thought, and resolutely willed.

Yet the stamp is not the same. The two minds, even in these momentary utterances, are distinguishable. The greatness, whether of the same order or not, is not wholly of the same kind. The two sayings of Dante suggest, if they do not denote, a richer capacity for sorrow, and for love, and for the vision of divine things. The two sayings of Milton suggest, if they do not de-

note, a more outspoken faith in man's power to shape his fate, to make his own heaven and hell, and to find heroism more beautiful than death is sad.

If we try to get nearer to these distinctions, it is natural to think first of the obvious fact that the two poets stood for different, and antagonistic, forms of the Christian faith. Yet, while Dante was a devout Catholic, and Milton a very pronounced and militant Protestant, this distinction does not carry us very far. Each was not only far more, but something other, than his creed implies. Dante not only assails the papacy with the sternness of a Hebrew prophet; he reinterprets and spiritualizes Catholic dogma. And Milton fearlessly uses his Protestant liberty of private judgement upon the fabric of Protestantism itself, fashioning not only his own heaven and hell, but his own God and Christ, and his own interpretation of the history and the destiny of man.

With all this, there is a real and close parallel between the two men, their lives, and their works. This may be summarized under the following heads :

1. What I may call the virginal quality of mind is nowhere in literature more clearly manifested than in the Dante of the *Vita Nuova* and the Milton of *Comus*.

2. Each, though supreme in literature, was yet in no sense a 'man of letters' but in the largest sense a *statesman*, labouring single-souled and in the main single-handed, for the needs, as he understood them, of his country, and of mankind. And each understood his country's supreme need in intrinsically the same way, as a condition which would permit every citizen to attain welfare here and salvation hereafter; a condition which the one called peace and the other liberty.

3. Each pursued this end by a series of writings, in prose and verse, culminating in two great poems which stand alone in literature; for, alone among the great poems of the world, they were meant to be instruments

of human liberation by divine discipline, composed by poetic craft out of the inherited ideas and traditions of the Christian faith.

## I

‘Of all poets’, says Milton, describing his own studies as a youth at Cambridge, ‘I preferred the two famous singers of Beatrice and Laura, who never write but honour of them to whom they devote their verses, displaying sublime and pure thoughts without transgression.’ And no English reader of that day was better qualified to understand both the purity and the sublimity of the *Vita Nuova* than the young scholar and poet of Christ’s who, a few years afterwards, composed the great Puritan hymn of *Comus*.<sup>1</sup> Between *Comus* and the *Vita Nuova* lie countless differences; but there sounds, naïve and implicit in the one, eloquent and impassioned in the other, the note of the virginal mind.

In the perennial endeavour to subdue his own baser impulses the spirit of man, as reflected in history and literature, has followed one of two courses, enjoined by two distinct schools of moralists and poets. The animal within us may be suppressed, or he may be transformed. The beast may be worked out by muzzling and caging him, or by educating and ennobling him. The ascetic repudiates the senses, the idealist transfigures them. To the Milton of *Comus* and the Dante of *Vita Nuova* the beast was equally obnoxious. But it was natural that Dante, approaching from the side of a noble philosophy of love, should take the second way, and that Milton, approaching through Puritanism, should take the first.

In the later thirteenth century, when Dante was growing up, the dominant prepossession and inspiration of Italian poetry was the passion of love. Dante himself notices that the poetry of war, so prolific in the romances of chivalry of Northern France, had no counterpart south of the Alps;<sup>2</sup> and when he wished

<sup>1</sup> *De Vulg. Elog.* ii. 2.

to distinguish the sincerity of his own poetic speech from the rhetoric of weaker rivals, he described himself as 'one who writes what Love dictates in his heart'.<sup>1</sup>

Dante's love poetry had taken shape under the influence successively of two schools, the one of immense vogue, personated by a host of famous singers; the other concentrated mainly in the work of a single abstruse and unpopular poet.

The love poetry of Provence bore the impress of the brilliant accomplishment, the triviality, and the licence of the society in which it flourished. Like that society it was regulated by an elaborate code of laws; but its polished and often exquisite form was rarely associated with sublime ideas, and its air of aristocratic high breeding thinly veiled its inner sensuality. In Sicily, at the splendid court of Frederick II, and later in Tuscany, in Dante's youth, Troubadour poetry was imitated with inferior skill and without the support of a feudal society like that in which it had grown up.

But by the middle of the century, and especially during the twenty years 1260–80, traces appear in several quarters of a loftier conception of love. In some of the later Troubadours themselves there are the germs of a reaction from the brilliant banality of the established mode. In Umbria, religious mysticism, borrowing the language of love-passion, imbued love-passion too with a mystic and religious air. In Tuscany, Guittome d'Arezzo intellectualized the purely amatory lyric with discussions of the philosophy of love, and sought to recast its facile style in the nobler mould of the Latin period. But the most original development, and the only one which deeply impressed Dante, was that effected at Bologna, during Dante's boyhood, by Guido Guinizelli. Bologna was a famous seat of the cultivation both of Roman law and of the newly recovered philosophy of Aristotle; and Guido's ideas of love reflect the temper

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxiv. 52 f.

of a philosophical student as clearly as did the Provençal love doctrine that of a feudal court. But they also reflect the democratic temper of a great Italian city. And to both these qualities Guido brought the fire of a true poet. The 'new sweet style', which he originated, was a fusion of all these things so finely adapted to the spiritual and civic needs of Italy at that moment, that it found instant and joyous acceptance among her choicest spirits. For it supplied the formula of a new life, instinct at once with the gladness of youth and the seriousness of manhood. 'They found in it', as Parodi has aptly said, 'a way of reaching through love towards an equality in true nobility against the pretensions of aristocratic superiority : a means of allowing full scope to amorous sentiment while making womanhood and the lyric praise of women an instrument of moral perfection.'<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental doctrine of Guido, then, is an exaltation of love such as we are inclined to call Platonic, but which was at least implicit in Christian scholasticism, where it kept at bay the theological dogma that love was an evil, and woman a snare. That love can, like divine possession, quicken the vision of good and the accessibility to noble impulse, was as clear to Guido as to Plato, and he boldly identified love with this exalting potency of love-passion. In his famous *Canzone*, Love and nobleness are inseparable as the Sun and its splendour ; love seeks its place in the noble heart as the bird in the greenery ; and as water quenches fire, so love quenches everything mean in the heart at its touch. It was this Guido whom Dante exalted, not only above all his contemporaries and predecessors, but above all who had ever rhymed of love. And while he had sat at the feet of the Troubadours, and still admired some of them profoundly even when he had reached the summits of

<sup>1</sup> Parodi, *Poesia e storia nella D.C.* I owe this and some other references to recent discussions of the *dolce stil nuovo* to the kindness of my former colleague, Prof. E. Gardner.

his own poetry (witness his eulogy of Daniel Arnaut in the *Purgatory*), it is Guido who is, in this poetry of love, and the noble style he had found for it, Dante's master; 'my father and the father of better poets than I.'<sup>1</sup>

And we know, in fact, that in Florence the Bolognese poet had found gifted disciples among Dante's elder contemporaries; particularly in that Chiaro Davanzati, whom recent research is lifting to a place of growing importance in his *entourage*. A generation senior to Dante, Chiaro had, during Dante's youth, developed the fundamental thought of Guido, and assimilated at least the germ of the 'new sweet style'. It has even been thought that he, rather than Guido, was Dante's inspiring source.<sup>2</sup> Dante's silence is, however, surely decisive.

But whatever he may be thought to owe to Chiaro, whatever he certainly owed to Guido, it is in the *Vita Nuova*, of course, that we find the noblest, the final, embodiment of the new poetry of love. It is evident indeed that Dante did not reach this consummation at a single step. His nature was too rich and too passionate to learn at once Guido's philosophy of exalted renunciation. He knew both love and a poetry of love, far remote from the love and the poetry he devoted to the service of Beatrice. The superb canzoni addressed to the lady whom he calls 'Pietra' breathe the ruthless frenzy of physical passion in strange contrast with their consummate technique.<sup>3</sup> External evidence of date for these poems is wholly wanting. But the high authority of M. Barbi, the last editor (*Op. di D.*, Pref. p. x), assigns them to the period before the *Vita Nuova*. Undoubtedly this view best accords with what we know on other grounds of the psychology of Dante. And the *Vita Nuova* itself bears traces of the process from a lower

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxvi. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Casini, *Lett. Ital.*, I. cxxiv. Cf. C. Vossler, *Die philosoph. Grundlagen zum 'süssen neuen Stil' des G. Guinizelli . . .* (Heidelb. 1904).

<sup>3</sup> *Opere di Dante*, Soc. Dant. Ital.; canzone cihi.

type of love to that which finally became dominant. The earlier sections of the narrative, and the poems inlaid in it, are still moulded by the conventions of Troubadour courtship—conventions of secrecy, of ‘screen-ladies’, and the like, which had a meaning in feudal Provence but not in civic Florence. But he begins to be aware that he is not worshipping Love aright. Love appears to him in a dream (§ 12) and tells him with a sigh, ‘My son, it is time to put away these phantoms.’ And Love weeps, and at Dante’s questioning replies : ‘I am as the centre of a circle, to which all parts of the circumference are equally related ; but thou art not so.’ For Dante’s love is still that of the wooer who expects a reward, he seeks Beatrice’s pity, and is overwhelmed because he is denied her salute. Suddenly (at the 18th section) the veil is lifted, and he sees that the blessedness of love lies, not in a reward; but in a homage without thought of self ; and the first words of the great canzone, ‘Ladies who have understanding of Love’, come of themselves into his mind. A single stanza will suffice to unfold his high interpretation of Love, one as notable as Plato’s in its reaction upon later thought :

‘I say that whoso would seem a gentle lady, let her go with her; for when she passeth by the way, Love casteth a chill into base hearts whereby every thought of theirs freezes and perishes. And whoso should endure to stay and behold her, would become a noble thing or else would die; and when she findeth one worthy to behold her, he proveth not her virtue; for this befalleth him, that she giveth him salutation and maketh him so humble that he forgetteth every offence. Also hath God given her for a higher grace that whoso hath once spoken with her cannot end ill.’

Beatrice is thus seen by Dante’s ecstatic intuition as a spiritual power, bringing earthly things into compliance with the divine order of the world ; and there is more than convention in his eulogy when he declares that Heaven craves her, wanting nothing of perfection but her presence.

But Dante feels that even this praise, which other poets also had used of their ladies, does not exhaust either the nature of Beatrice or the meaning of her love ; and the *Vita Nuova* ends with the declaration that he would speak no more of her until such time as he could treat of her more worthily ; hoping, by study, after some few years, to write of her what hath never been writ of any woman.

The few years lasted to the end of his life, for it is only in the *Paradiso* that this purpose is completely fulfilled. They also witnessed digressions, which retarded or imperilled its fulfilment. The *Convivio* and the *Pietra* sonnets bear witness to passions, philosophic or erotic, which withdrew if they did not estrange. But the final representation only gives fuller and more magnificent articulation to the utterances of that early Canzone. It helps matters little to say that the Beatrice of the *Comedy* is simply a personification of Theology or Revelation ; as little as to say that she is simply Beatrice Portinari of Florence. However much she symbolizes in Dante's thought, the Beatrice of the *Vita Nuova* lives on in her ; as that Beatrice had refused him her salutation, so this one reproves him, and no less pitilessly, for his unfaithfulness to her 'school' ; as that Beatrice ennobled all whom she encountered, so this Beatrice intervenes to lead her lover through Hell and Purgatory to Paradise. At every stage intellectual illumination and moral purification go hand in hand ; and the consummation of Beatrice's work, of the transforming power of that selfless love, is not more to have won for him the vision of God, the crowning experience of the Paradise, than it is to have effected that complete oneness of his will with the Will of the universe, which makes him at length 'concentric with the Love which moves the sun and the other stars'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fletcher, N.Y. *Nation*, 16 December 1909. *Par.* xxxiii, end.

## II

These, then, were some of the 'sublime and pure thoughts, without transgression' which John Milton in his early twenties at Cambridge found in the 'famous renowner of Beatrice', and which led him to prefer Dante and Petrarch above all other poets. Yet even these words betray that Milton had not penetrated the inner shrine of the *Vita Nuova*; that his intellectual sympathy with the poet to whom he paid this sincere and lofty homage, was not complete. The three intervening centuries had created yawning fissures in the culture of Europe, and these were far less easily bridged, even by poetic insight, in Milton's generation than in ours. The *Comedy* itself was in part framed of perishable and perishing materials, and it was less obvious then than now that the edifice itself was immortal. The great scholastic doctors had been driven into disrepute even in the Catholic world by the intoxicating discoveries of Humanism; and Milton, though his strong intellect was by no means without scholastic traits, was a member not only of the foremost of Protestant peoples, but of that left wing of Protestantism which had flung away most scornfully every remnant of the faith of Rome. Humanism and Puritanism met in Milton; and if, as we shall see, their encounter was at certain points a clash, they both fanned his animosity towards the faith of Dante. Of that faith the supreme authority had been the angelic doctor Thomas Aquinas; but Milton haughtily avowed that he preferred to Aquinas the wisdom of 'the sage and serious poet Spenser'. Milton's intense and vehement nature was more warped by the negations of his creed than are many minds of far less compass than his own. Newman confessed sadly that Milton 'hated the Catholic Church'. Certainly he was too much obsessed by the monstrous iniquities of its pre-Reformation decadence to have eyes for the power

and beauty achieved in its creative age. Dante's large sympathy embraced the virtuous heathen whom his dogma required him to damn ; but there is no sign that Francis of Assisi, a 'virtuous heathen' for a Puritan, was for Milton more than the founder of one of that brood of medieval misbirths—pilgrims, eremites, and friars 'white, black, and grey, with all their trumpery'—whom he consigns to his limbo of mischievous futility with the Greek Titans and the Biblical builders of Babel.<sup>1</sup>

Dante himself was thus too deeply implicated in the scholasticism and catholicism of his age, to be seen by Milton in his full stature even as a poet. Incidental allusions show that he was familiar with the whole *Comedy*. Perhaps of all seventeenth-century Englishmen he knew it best. The musician in him responded to the entrancing scene where Dante met his musician friend, Casella, 'in the milder shades of Purgatory';<sup>2</sup> and he remembered Dante's description of Beatrice as she who 'imparadises my mind',<sup>3</sup> when he made Satan envious at the spectacle of Adam and Eve 'imparadised in one another's arms'.<sup>4</sup> But to judge from the repeated entries in his commonplace book, Dante engaged Milton's keenest interest less as a poet than as the great ally within the Catholic camp who had anticipated the thunders of Protestant denunciation of simonist popes and corrupt clergy. Certainly, the *Inferno*, with its savagery and ugliness, despite the human grandeur which breaks through in the heartening words of Ulysses or the Satan-like defiance of Farinata, must have repelled him ; as the mystic and transcendent metaphysics of the *Paradiso* must have left him cold.

All this has to be remembered when we are trying to enter into the mind of the young Milton as he read the

<sup>1</sup> *P.L.* iii. 474.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* ii. 76. Milton's Sonnet to Henry Lawes.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxviii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *P.L.* iv. 506.

*Vita Nuova*. He certainly apprehended those 'sublime and pure thoughts' which he so nobly praised. But he praised them as an alien, across a gulf for him impassable. In Italy itself the delicate virginal passion which fills the *Vita Nuova* with the fragrance as of a newly opened flower, had hardly survived its poet; artifice is apparent even in the exquisite grace of Petrarch; and long before Milton the fresh flower had become an embroidered blossom, whose elegant pattern was diligently copied with variations by the legion of fashionable sonneteers. For the love-sonnet as it had been practised in England in the generation before his birth, Milton's language and practice express, with one reserve, an unqualified disdain.<sup>1</sup> His English Sonnets, whether of public policy, or friendship, or personal confession, disengage themselves peremptorily in tone and topic from the main current of Petrarchan, and from the whole English, tradition.<sup>2</sup> In spite of his outspoken homage to Petrarch and Dante, he habitually speaks as if all love-poets were 'vulgar amourists', and as if the ascetic scholar who resolves to shun delights and live laborious days resigned only the cheap satisfaction of sporting with Amaryllis in the shade, and not also those 'sublime and pure thoughts without transgression', which had come to Dante and Petrarch, as Milton so clearly recognized, through love.

We have evidence, it is true, of an episode in Milton's experience which betrays a different attitude towards both love and the conventional poetry of love. The six Italian sonnets, commonly assigned to his Italian journey of 1638, have been shown by Dr. Smart to reflect more probably an attachment, during his early manhood, to

<sup>1</sup> Smart, *The Sonnets of Milton*, pp. 135 f.

<sup>2</sup> This remains true notwithstanding Mr. Smart's proof of his debt, in the formal handling of the Sonnet, to an Italian precursor, De la Casa, who himself deliberately broke with the Petrarchan tradition (*u.s.*, pp. 30 f.).

a lady of Italian origin resident in England, whom Milton addressed in her native language, as being 'the language of love'. And his Italian is predominantly the language of Italian sonneteers. But Milton's personality did not readily take the print of any alien mould, and, as Mr. Smart has shown,<sup>1</sup> the self-conscious and self-sufficing nature of the poet at times asserts itself, and the conventional veil falls away. It would be idle to compare these discreet love-poems of Milton with the vehement passion of Dante's *Pietra canzoni*, except in a single respect. They show that in the career of the Puritan as of the Catholic poet there was a moment in which he experienced love and the poetry of love in a kind which he finally renounced. Dante put away the last traces of Troubadour convention in the ennobled love of the *Vita Nuova*. Milton renounced love as more than a conjugal bond interpreted in the most pragmatic terms ; and he became henceforth incapable of the poetry of love.

Now we seem here to have our finger on one of those points at which the poet in Milton, who was not less accessible than Dante himself to 'sublime thoughts', encountered an inhibition in his own nature ; so that the sublimity he found in the virginal love of Dante and Petrarch, though it *touched* his imagination, could not inspire it. We may say, if we like, that this inhibition was the restraining grip of the Puritan in Milton upon the native bent of the poet ; and in fact in this glowing tribute itself we overhear the harsher Puritan cadence at the close, adding that these sublime and pure thoughts are 'without transgression'.<sup>2</sup> What modern reader ever rose from the *Vita Nuova* reflecting that Dante had spoken of Beatrice throughout 'without transgression' ?

<sup>1</sup> *The Sonnets of Milton*, by John S. Smart. Dr. Smart shows with great ingenuity that the lady's name was probably Emilia. He calls attention to the 'portrait of Milton' in the sixth sonnet; vv. 4-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Apol. for Smect.*

The assertion is almost sacrilege. Yet no coldly ascetic nature would have read and gloried in it at all. Milton's temper was not cold but ardent; his asceticism was the passionate and immoderate self-control of one by nature impelled to love. By this native bent he had early been drawn to immerse himself in and delight in all the poetry of love, becoming accomplished in the art of the 'smooth elegiac poets' of Rome, who had known and told all the secrets of secular erotics; and only later, at Cambridge, began to 'deplore the men', while still 'applauding their art'.<sup>1</sup> If he preferred Dante and Petrarch, then, to Ovid and Propertius, it was as a Puritan no less than as a poet; he found there a love poetry 'without transgression'. And the same animus colours his later studies, as reported by himself in the same place. The Romantic in him is drawn to the romances of chivalry, and he must have read, like Dante, of Galeotto and Guinevere, Roland, Tristan and Iseult; and of those 'knights of Logres and of Lyonesse, Lancelot, and Pelleas, and Pellenore', whose resonant names touch with splendour the grey verse of his old age.<sup>2</sup> But what he now records is only how every knight was sworn to defend the chastity of virgin or matron:

'from whence even then I learned what a noble virtue chastity sure must be, to the defence of which so many worthies, by such a dear adventure of themselves, had sworn. . . . Only this my mind gave me, that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath, ought to be born a knight, nor needed to expect the gilt spur . . . to secure and protect the weakness of any attempted chastity. So even these books which to many others have been the fuel of wantonness and loose living, I cannot think how, unless by divine indulgence, proved to me so many incitements to the love and steady observance of that virtue which abhors [profligacy].'

And when he goes on to the philosophers, the same inborn attraction is seen, subjected to the same Puritan

<sup>1</sup> *Apol. for Smect.* (ed. Bohn), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> *P.R.* ii. 58 f.

inhibition. For it is chiefly to 'the divine volumes of Plato . . .' that he goes, the master-poet of ideal love. But here too the Puritan in him instinctively swerves aside from the passion even of the noble lover for the beloved, which according to the *Phaedrus* is the source of his sublime vision of truth, and fastens only on the intellectual and moral benefits which it is declared to induce. Plato taught him, he declares, of chastity and love. 'I mean that which is truly so, whose charming cup is only Virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy, . . . and how the first and chiefest office of love begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, knowledge and virtue.'<sup>1</sup> Plainly, Plato's thought has acquired a more Puritan colouring in Milton's mind. Plato makes the passion even of the noble lover an intoxication, which is the very condition of his acquiring a reach of vision beyond that of cool reason; Milton, consciously or not, alters the whole purport of the thought; with him it is only the sensual lovers who experience the intoxication of passion, and it is from their intoxication precisely that their fatuous delusions spring;—they are 'cheated with a thick intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love's name, carries about'. Milton had the strength and the weakness of his clear rationality; even his loftiest inspirations owed little to the divine unreason which Plato declared to be 'the source of the chiefest blessings among men'.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the virginal mind in Milton has forgone the capacity for such love as Dante's for Beatrice, and while no less noble and pure, has grown more self-conscious, aggressive, and declamatory. His high doctrine of chastity can yield him sublime thoughts, too, but they will be other than those inspired by the love of Beatrice. They are enshrined in the great Masque,

*Apol.* 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedrus*, 244 a.

composed eight years before the *Apology*, which we know as *Comus*.

*Comus* is a Puritan hymn to Chastity. Plot and persons are devised to exhibit its victorious encounter with vice. The humanist Petrarch had glorified such encounters in history and legend in a famous poem under the Roman symbol of a Triumph;<sup>1</sup> and it was in the spirit of the mature Petrarch, not of the young Dante, the spirit of humanist panegyric, not of mystic reticence, that Milton celebrated the shyest of the virtues here. His readings in the ancient poets, in Plato, and in medieval romance, are drawn with exquisite tact into the service of the single aim. The situation is that which had fascinated him in the romances—the chastity of a maiden, assailed and vindicated. He, as well as Dante, was nurtured in the traditions of chivalry, only it was the knight defending threatened virtue, not the knightly lover, who counted with Milton. The assailant, Comus, son of Bacchus and Circe, is equipped for the purpose with all the intoxicating spells for mind and sense and imagination, which that origin implies. The two brothers are the rescuing knights, and the Elder Brother explains with Plato's help both the philosophical ground of the high doctrine of Chastity, and also the ground of his assurance of his sister's safety. Plato's great doctrine of Love, of which Milton was to speak in the *Apology*, is here ignored altogether. Milton is not concerned with the contrast between noble and ignoble love, but with that between the soul which abhors vice and that which yields to it.

He calls in to his aid the great passage in the *Phaedo*<sup>2</sup> which describes how the pure soul becomes a part of the divine and immortal world, while the impure soul is dragged down to and clogged with the body it has served; building upon this a not less splendid passage of

<sup>1</sup> The 'Trionfo della Castità' is the second of his *Trionfi*.

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedo*, 80-1.

his own, where Plato's thought reappears clothed in the yet more transcendent symbols of Christian asceticism :

So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity  
 That when a soul is found sincerely so,  
 A thousand liveried angels lackey her,  
 Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
 And in clear dream and solemn vision  
 Tell her of things which no gross ear can hear,  
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
 Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,  
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
 Till all be made immortal.<sup>1</sup>

But Chastity, for Milton in *Comus*, is not fully symbolized by this saintly figure, with its protecting angels. She is a militant champion, Diana the huntress with her dread bow taming the lioness and the pard, or wise Minerva with her Gorgon shield freezing her foes to stone. And at this point we seem, at length, to approach for a moment the *Vita Nuova* which Milton so greatly honoured. When Beatrice goes by the way, her presence freezes and destroys the base thoughts of those who look on her. Was not Milton remembering this passage when he declared that Minerva's Gorgon shield 'wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone' was no material buckler:

But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
 And noble grace that dashed brute violence  
 With sudden adoration and blank awe?<sup>2</sup>

But the approach is only for a moment, and there is even, when we look closer, a significant difference in the ethical implication of the two passages. Milton's Chastity, sublime and exalted as it is, is at bottom a self-regarding virtue; his warrior maid is concerned to disable her foes, not to ennoble them; and if a momentary suggestion of the creative and transforming glance of

<sup>1</sup> *Com.* 458 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 450.

Beatrice has come into Milton's picture, if the Gorgon-shield of her rigid looks does not only freeze base thoughts but awakens wonder and reverence, the change is important not because her enemy has become a 'nobil cosa', but because he is no longer formidable.

Milton has clothed his ideal in a splendour quite foreign to the *naïveté* of Dante's youthful art; and his Lady, 'defending the sun-clad power of Chastity', is not less sublime, in her more secular and militant way, than Beatrice, the desired of Heaven, when Comus trembles before her flaming scorn:

Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend  
The sublime notion and high mystery  
That must be uttered to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of Virginity; . . .  
Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth  
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits  
To such a flame of sacred vehemence  
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,  
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake  
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,  
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.<sup>1</sup>

But great and noble as both are, Dante's spirit is the richer and more humane, for it knows not only purity, but love, a purity that is rooted in love, a love that is rooted in purity; whereas Milton describes a virtue which, with all its dazzling and soaring splendour, only repels and repudiates the humanity below it.

Dante, as I said, had greater capacity for love, Milton for the self-asserting energy of the human mind.

### III

Both *Comus* and the *Vita Nuova* contain the germ of what their poets were in after days to become. The conflict between Comus and the Lady is resumed on a vaster scale, and to a more tragic issue, in *Paradise*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 784 f.

*Lost*; and in the *Comedy* Dante magnificently fulfilled the vow recorded in the last lines of the *Vita Nuova*, to write of Beatrice what had never yet been writ of woman. And that 'new sweet style' itself, which might seem to be only a discovery of a beautiful way of writing, was charged with the ethical and political idealism of democratic Florence; with the conviction that nobility comes not by rank and blood, but by high thinking, open to all. While Milton's no less ethical scorn for the hirelings in the Church breaks out through the flowers and melodies of *Lycidas*. Between their early manhood and their ripe fulfilment lay, for both men, years of strenuous labour devoted to making these ideals explicit. Both turned from the problems of poetry to the problems of statesmanship, and in spite of the obvious difference both of the political conditions they coped with, the causes they battled for, and the terms in which they thought, both sought one end—to bring about in the State the conditions of spiritual welfare. Both worked with and through parties, but both stood above party, and each eventually fought, single-handed, a party by himself. And both witnessed the seemingly complete frustration of the political causes for which they had fought.

Consider for a moment the political conditions of the societies into which these two great idealists were born, Italy in the thirteenth century, and England in the seventeenth. The Italy of Dante might be described as a ruinous fragment of a palace magnificently planned, of which only a façade or a tower here and there was ever executed. The England of Milton was a small compact edifice built on a corner of the palace area in complete independence of that magnificent plan, but now itself shaken to the foundations by a conflict among its occupants. Dante's Italy was the most civilized and the most anarchic country of Europe; its crowd of cities, focuses of dawning art and poetry, were independent

republics or princedoms, constantly at feud with one another, and racked by even bitterer civil feud within; while the deadliest enemies of all, and the most disastrous in their enmity, were two shadows or caricatures of divine omnipotence, the Pope and the Emperor—wielders in title of the highest authority on earth. For to them, according to medieval theory, had been assigned by God the government of the whole world: the Pope was God's vicegerent in spiritual things, the Emperor in temporal things. When Charles the Great was crowned Emperor at Rome by the Pope, in 800, when Innocent III four hundred years later laid England under interdict, and excommunicated King John, the palace of world-order so magnificently planned seemed to be rising to the sky; but it was soon apparent that the splendid façade had no solid structure behind it, and by Dante's time to most dispassionate eyes it stood a hopeless wreck. To believe that it could yet be made a mansion for distracted Europe needed the faith and the hope of a visionary poet. That faith and that hope were found in Dante, and they spoke trumpet-tongued in the great treatise on Monarchy, which expounds the magnificent plan of that world-order on the eve of its final and irrevocable doom.

For Milton's England, the world-power claimed by Pope and Empire had become an obsolete memory. In her moated stronghold she had built up a compact and secure independent kingdom, where the Emperor's writ had never run, and for half a century the Pope had wielded merely the menace of a distant foreign power. She was the mother of parliaments, and the chief bulwark of Protestantism. The discovery of America had transferred the centre of the commercial world from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic seaboard, and London was outstripping Antwerp and Amsterdam as they had outstripped Venice and Genoa. But the claims of Pope and Emperor to absolute authority over the world

were now resumed, with far more formidable power to enforce them, over England, by the bishops and the King. And while the Pope and the Emporor had been bitter rivals, both claiming supreme temporal power, the English bishops exercised temporal power with the King's full authority and support. Italy was convulsed by the conflict of authorities, and its need was order; England by the abuse of authority, and its need was freedom. Hence Dante and Milton, each with few rivals the most comprehensive thinker and the most single-souled patriot of his time, seem to be proclaiming different, even contradictory, forms of political faith. What approach can there be between Dante, who longed for the coming of the German emperor, as the promise of salvation for Italy, like a Hebrew prophet longing for the coming of the Lord, and Milton, who made Europe ring from side to side with his defence of the execution of a king? Or what accommodation can there be between Milton, who hated the Roman Church, and Dante, for whom the Popes, with all their aberrations, were still the spiritual vicegerents of God? Let us look closer, however.

Both men sought in politics neither power, nor wealth, nor the interest of friends, or any other personal end; but the spiritual welfare of the State. When Dante entered political life at Florence, in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, he found conditions more anarchical than could be paralleled in Milton's England before the civil war. The city was divided against itself by insoluble differences of race, social customs, and legal institutions. The traditions of the Roman municipality and of the Germanic tribe, of democratic citizens and feudal retainers, of merchants in their guilds and military nobles in their fortified palaces, struggled for mastery in the commune of Florence; and in the background loomed Pope and Emperor, intriguing, intervening, throwing the weight of

their power on one side or the other, but never attempting to reconcile them. In this turbulent civic arena the rival pretensions of spiritual and temporal power, as such, were of little concern; the pith of the struggle was between citizens and magnates, legality and the right of private feud. Dante, though of noble descent, joined the party of civic legality. But this party was itself split into two factions even more bitterly opposed to one another than they had been to their opponents. During the years following 1292, when the civic party carried a series of democratic ordinances to curb the licence of the magnates,<sup>1</sup> the feud between the 'Whites', who wished to carry out the ordinances strictly, and the 'Blacks', who wished to compromise, almost effaces in Florence the older and larger feud of Guelfs and Ghibellines. Dante, again, attached himself to the party which better maintained the tradition of Roman law and the conditions of civic peace.

The catastrophe which ruined this party, and involved Dante in its ruin, only gave a more passionate intensity to his demand for peace and law. But the instrument by which they were to be secured assumed a new and startling form in his mind. It was the Emperor, the successor of the Caesars, whom Dante wished to see entering Italy and forcibly suppressing the disorders rife in her. Only two generations before, the great Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II had actually ruled South Italy and Sicily. The actual entrance of Henry VII in 1310 seemed to augur the crowning of Dante's hopes. He addressed to Henry letters filled with the passionate longing which the imminence of deliverance inspired. And in the great treatise already mentioned, written probably at this very time, he came

<sup>1</sup> The Ordinances made the entire clan responsible for the murder of a burgher by any member of it. This reform was prepared for by the regulation which in 1282 had constituted the heads of the merchant guilds magistrates for the entire city.

forward with an imposing defence of imperial authority, probably the most magnificent apologia ever composed for the Roman empire.

Its argument soon makes clear that Dante is no imperialist of any common type. His politics are rooted in his religion. His doctrine of the state is a corollary of his doctrine of the universe and of man. He lays his foundations deep in abstract principle. What is the universal end of human civilization? The complete fulfilment, he replies, of the possibilities of mind, both in speculation and in action. For this, peace is above all needed, and for the maintenance of peace, *justice*, and this is best secured by a single universal rule from which the antagonisms and quarrels of States are excluded, because they are all merged in one. Have we not an example of this 'Monarchia', he asks, in the universal rule of God? And he infers, with the sublime *naïveté* of genius, that the ideal form of government for man must, then, be one modelled upon that divine pattern of 'monarchy', an all-embracing 'single government' like his. So intimately were divine and human things wedded in the medieval mind.

But this abstract reasoning is merely the basis of his practical contention, which is that the Roman Empire, including the existing Empire which claimed to represent it, was divinely established to exercise that universal monarchy. The Roman people ruled by full right, for they were the noblest of the nations, chosen by God for the purpose; a choice proved by signs and wonders all through Roman history—the shield of Numa, the geese which warned of the attack on the Capitol, the hail which prevented Hannibal's assault upon the City, and finally by the fact that as soon as the Empire had been securely founded by the accession of Augustus, and the ordered mansion thus provided for Christ to be born in, and the Christian Church to have its home, Christ and his Church were born. The

Incarnation was thus, for Dante, the one far-off divine event to which the entire history and evolution of the Roman Commonwealth, from Romulus onward, moved; and the divine sanction thus manifested in its earlier stages of progressive conquest was guaranteed thereby, even in its later stages of disruption and impoverishment, to the Empire, now no more than a single State in the unruly complex of the States of Europe.

And, in the light of these ideas, we understand how the men who had impiously assailed and retarded this divine consummation are, for Dante, the most abhorrent of all criminals; how he plunges Brutus and Cassius, who struck down the 'first and only Imperator', Caesar, with Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ, into the lowest pit of his Inferno, to be champed for ever in the blood-foaming jaws of Lucifer; while every form of treason to the State is branded by him more sternly than any other form of wrong. Milton neither felt nor could feel passion of this kind directed against traitors of this character. For him the State was threatened, if at all, by traitors on the throne.

Whatever we may think of the historic justification of this view of the Roman Commonwealth, its grandeur cannot escape the most fanatic of Protestants, and we can understand the exaltation which Dante felt when this vision of its divine meaning, like a new planet, swam into his ken. For it had not always been his; and he tells us something of the discovery in the glowing dithyrambs which open his Second Book:

"Why did the nations rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? The princes of the world came together against the Lord and his Christ: let us break their chains, and fling their yoke far from us!" Even as we commonly wonder at a new effect when we do not understand its cause, so when we know its cause we look with a certain derision on those who continue to wonder. I myself once wondered that the Roman people had

mastered the world without resistance, for, to my superficial gaze, it seemed that they had won it not by rightful title, but only by violence of arms. But when I had penetrated to the core, and recognized that this was the work of divine providence, my wonder passed, and a certain derision supervened, when I saw the nations rage against the supremacy of the Roman people, and the peoples imagining vain things, and kings and princes agreeing in one thing only, to oppose the Lord and his anointed, the Prince of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

But the toughest part of the practical problem remained. The Pope as well as the Emperor claimed universal rule, and by a divine title far more widely acknowledged. It is the object of the third book of the *De Monarchia* to rebut these claims, and to demarcate the provinces rightly belonging to the Empire and to the Church. The Church, he concludes, is modelled on and limited by the mind and life of Christ; its saints are 'citizens of that Rome where Christ is a Roman';<sup>2</sup> it has to care for the welfare of men hereafter, and its kingdom, like Christ's, not being of this world, it cannot convey authority, as it claimed, to a temporal ruler. The Emperor, on his part, derived his title directly from God, and his whole function, which was also exclusively his, was to care for the welfare of men in this life.

It will be seen, then, that the aims which underlie and determine Dante's ardent imperialist faith have nothing in common with imperialism as now understood. To-day, imperialism is apt to be acutely nationalist and bellicose; for Dante it was the way, the only way, to internationalism and to peace. His great word was Peace, and peace meant for him the State in which men are free to fulfil themselves, to carry out all the possibilities of thought and action which God put within their grasp and intended them to exercise; to become, in

<sup>1</sup> *De Mon.* ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xxxii. 101.

Peer Gynt's phrase, 'what Master meant them to be'; and what Peer himself so disastrously failed in being. Hence there was the closest and most organic connexion, in Dante's mind, between the functions of the two powers of State and Church, whose conflict, in various disguises, was convulsing Italy. And though Dante's great book was primarily a vindication of temporal supremacy for the Empire, and a summons to the Church to resign its pretensions to temporal rule, its true inspiration was only secondarily political; the final purpose of an orderly and harmonious State was to provide the framework within which men could freely make that choice between good and evil which would determine their destiny hereafter. Hence, while the Church was warned off the sphere of governmental control, it was recognized as the higher of the two powers, to be revered as such by the lower.

But this last systematic utterance of Dante's political ideals was swiftly followed by the event which finally frustrated them—the death of Henry VII in 1314. Political solutions were bankrupt, and Dante, retiring, grieved but not in despair, from the closed and barred gate of politics, opened for himself and for his countrymen and for the world, the door into the immeasurably richer and ampler mansion of the Comedy.

#### IV

Milton first decisively intervened in politics at about the same age as Dante. Both men were in the neighbourhood of 'the midpoint in life's journey', their thirty-fifth year, when Dante was resisting the machinations of Boniface VIII at Rome, and Milton publishing his series of pamphlets against episcopacy. The outer circumstances were unlike enough. Dante was a high State official, attempting to ward off the menace of a foreign power; Milton a private citizen, contending

single-handed with the champions of a State institution. But they were fighting for the same cause, the vindication of spiritual liberty against the usurpations of ecclesiastical authority. Boniface had menaced the Florentine State from without, but Milton saw a no less formidable menace to the spiritual liberty of England in Laud enthroned at Canterbury, and imposing a strict ritual, half copied from Rome, upon the English Church. He had himself refused to take office in a Church so ruled ; and a little later, in *Lycidas*, he borrowed from Dante the device of bringing in St. Peter, the founder of the Christian Church himself, to rebuke its unworthy ministers. Milton certainly remembered the terrific passage in which St. Peter, his face scarlet with anger, denounces Boniface (at the date of the vision still alive) —‘he who usurps my place, my place, my place on earth, which in the sight of Christ is void, making Rome my sepulchre a sink of blood and filth, to the joy of the Fiend in hell’.<sup>1</sup> He remembered, too, the poet’s own stern rebuke of the futile preachers whose ignorant flocks ‘turn from the pastures full of wind’.<sup>2</sup> Milton fuses both these passages in the great invective pronounced by the Pilot of the Galilean Lake over the watery grave of *Lycidas*. It is strong evidence of the hold of Dante upon Milton in these years that he, the Protestant and Puritan, should call in the very saint whom the Roman Church claimed specially as her own, to denounce these English hireling clergy who

for their bellies’ sake  
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* xxix. 103 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxvii. 22 f. Compare the no less tremendous passage where Dante himself bursts into invective against the Simoniacs: ‘Ah tell me now, how much treasure did our Lord ask of St. Peter before he put the keys in his keeping.’ *Inf.* xix. 90.

<sup>3</sup> Among the allusions to Dante in Milton’s commonplace-book is one to his description of clerical avarice in *Inf.* vii.

and whose ignorant flocks

Swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;

and finally pronounce the sinister and enigmatic menace:

But that two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

A few months after *Lycidas* (1637) Milton was himself in Italy, making no secret of his Protestantism even in the metropolis of the papacy, and visiting Galilei, a prisoner of the Inquisition, at Dante's Florence.<sup>1</sup> And then, called home by the beginnings of the civil struggle, he was presently launching pamphlet after pamphlet at that incubus of episcopacy which in his eyes usurped the temporal power. Events fought for the time on Milton's side; Laud was tried and executed, the clerical incumbents were dispossessed. For a moment a rival church stepped into the authority of the Anglican; but Milton's ready distrust of all established religion soon concluded that 'new Presbyter was but old Priest writ large'.

When, after the ruin of the royal cause, and the death of the King, Anglican and Presbyterian establishment alike gave place to the rule of Cromwell, a situation came about not unlike that which might have ensued had Henry VII lived to carry out the policy of imperial intervention and mastery urged upon him by Dante, and made both the ecclesiastic and the secular governing powers subject to himself. It is probable that Dante, the victory once achieved, and the warring factions of Florence castigated into quiescence, might have had occasion like Milton to remind his triumphant chief that 'peace hath her victories No less renown'd than war'. For though Dante passionately implored the soldier's help, and Milton loftily celebrated 'God's

<sup>1</sup> Scepticism as to this astonishing visit has recently been expressed; but the alternative is to suppose that Milton published a deliberate falsehood.

'trophies' in the field—Darwen and Dunbar, and Worcester's laureate wreath—both poets were at one in abhorring militarism. No other great poet has so little sympathy with war as Dante; he may have fought for Florence as a young man, but he threw in his lot, as we saw, with the Florentine party which stood for civic law against sword-rule. The heaven of Mars in the *Paradiso*, which in other hands might have been peopled with great soldiers, is almost dominated by the single figure of Dante's great ancestor Cacciaguida; and the story of Roman conquest (*Par. vi*) is significantly put in the mouth of Justinian, for the whole task of the Roman sword had in his eyes been to prepare the way for the dominion of the Roman law. The emperor had to curb the secular usurpations of the priest, but Dante was no less resolute to oppose his intrusions upon spiritual privilege. It was not only the death of the emperor which frustrated Dante's dream. The conditions which permitted it for a moment to be realized in England were simpler and more favourable. Cromwell was not only a far abler soldier than Henry, but an immeasurably greater ruler and nobler man. Between Milton and the Protector there subsisted the mutual regard proper to spirits of such rare calibre. But Milton was acutely alive to the dangers of even the best-intentioned autocracy. And if he had caught from Homer and Tasso a zest of battle unknown to Dante, and could make a great military disaster—the *débâcle* of the rebel host—sublime even beyond Homeric parallel, he was even more acutely alive than Dante to the dangers of that military rule which Dante had in the name of Peace so passionately invoked. And he addressed to Cromwell, at the height of his power, words of grave warning. 'You cannot be truly free unless we are free too,' he tells him, towards the close of the magnificent *Second Defence of the People of England*, 'for such is the nature of things, that he who entrenches on the liberty of others

is the first to lose his own and become a slave.' It is interesting to compare the language which the two great poets held to the two great captains. Milton merely warns a powerful friend who has the same cause as he at heart; Dante, with an impatience ill concealed under that show of ceremonial phrase, exhorts and reproaches the emperor like a Hebrew prophet confronting some capricious Jewish king who might at any moment desert Jahve for Baal:

'Knowest thou not, most excellent of princes, from the watch-tower of thy altitude hast thou not perceived, where that stinking fox lurks, recking not of hunters? Not by the Po, nor by the Tiber, but by the Arno is her haunt, and the name of this pest (wotst thou not?) is Florence. . . . Ah then, bestir thyself, great offspring of Jesse, take confidence from the eyes of the Lord of Hosts who beholds thy deeds: and lay low this Goliath with the sling of thy wisdom and the pebble of thy might; for on his fall night and the shadow of fear will cover the camp of the Israelites; the Philistines will fly, and Israel be delivered.'<sup>1</sup>

But unlike as are these utterances, the ultimate purpose behind both was the same; and when Milton goes on, in that great peroration of the Second *Defensio*, to which only certain pages of Burke and a few of Wordsworth in English can be compared, to warn his fellow countrymen, also, that no outer freedom would avail them if they were without the inner freedom of self-mastery and disciplined obedience, he uttered, in the altered idiom of his time, the very spirit of Dante:

'Unless the liberty you win, fellow-citizens, be of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor take away, the liberty which alone is the fruit of piety, justice, temperance, unless this liberty have taken deep root in your minds and hearts, there will speedily come one who shall snatch from you treacherously what you have won by arms. Your peace will be only a more distressing war. Unless you will subjugate the propensity to avarice, to ambition, and sensuality, and expel all luxury from yourselves

<sup>1</sup> Ep. vii.

and your families, you will find that you have cherished a more stubborn and intractable despot at home than you ever encountered in the field; and even your very bowels will be continually teeming with an intolerable progeny of tyrants. . . . Unless you are victors in this service it is in vain that you have been victorious over the despotic enemy in the field. . . . From such an abyss of corruption into which you readily fall, no one, not even Cromwell himself, nor a whole nation of Brutuses, if they were alive, could deliver you if they would, or would deliver you if they could. . . . If, after such a display of courage and vigour, you basely relinquish the path of virtue, if you do anything unworthy of yourselves, posterity will sit in judgement on your conduct. They will see that the foundations were well laid; that the beginning was glorious; but with deep emotion they will regret that those were wanting who might have completed the structure. . . . They will see that there was a rich harvest of glory, and an opportunity afforded for the greatest achievements, but that only men were wanting for the execution.'<sup>x</sup>

Milton, if he were living to-day, might have used these words with even greater emphasis.

Dante certainly would have endorsed them; for his lofty imperialism was but an instrument for creating and preserving the conditions under which men by their inner virtue might achieve that kind of liberty which arms and governments as such can neither procure nor take away.

But Milton, like Dante, saw his political aims utterly frustrated. Cromwell died, in the fullness of his work, and the Restoration swept all English Puritanism to ruin.

## V

Yet it is in their adversity that both poets are most widely remembered, and that their memory is most moving to us. And both have allowed us to see in noble poetry something of what they suffered. Dante, in the

<sup>x</sup> In the same spirit Milton makes Christ, in *Paradise Regained*, answer Satan's offer of imperial power:

'Who can of inward slaves make outward free?'

grandest of his *Canzoni* (written at an earlier period of his exile, but applying with even added force to this), tells how he saw in a vision Righteousness and her children, beggared, ragged, starving and wayworn, come, seeking shelter, to the dwelling of Love, who is the lord of Dante's life.

"They were so fair and of such surpassing goodness that Loye my lord scarce dared to speak of them. Righteousness stood before him loudly wailing. Her head rested on one hand, like a broken rose on its stalk, her bare arm, a pillar of grief, felt the storm of tears that broke from her; the other hand hid her weeping face. When she had told her story, Love was for a while mute with pity and anger. Then at length, saluting the sorrowful kindred, he took out two darts: "These are the weapons I need, they are dulled as you see by disuse. Generosity and Temperance and the other sisters of our blood go begging their bread. But if that is grievous, let theirs be the weeping eyes and theirs the mourning lips whom it concerns, . . . not ours, who are hewn of the eternal rock; for, though now we be pierced, yet we shall endure, and there shall come again those that shall make this dart eternally bright." Then, Dante adds, as I listened to the sorrow and consolation bestowed in this divine converse by fugitives so noble, I counted as glory the exile vouchsafed to me; and if justice or destiny will that the world turn the white flowers dark, to perish among noble comrades is yet worthy praise.'<sup>1</sup>

And we see Milton projecting the shadow of his own isolation and of the ruin of the Puritan cause in the figure of the ruined hero Samson, in the prison of the Philistines:

Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him  
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves.

<sup>1</sup> *Canz.* civ (Opere, ed. Soc. Dant.). The above is compressed paraphrase.

And Milton too finds consolation, not only in Samson's heroic end:

Samson hath quit himself  
Like Samson, and heroicly hath finished  
A life heroic,

or in the overthrow of the Philistine power, or in his own eternal fame, but above all, in the proof that God was not parted from him, as was feared,

But favouring and assisting to the end.

But for a full understanding of what Dante and what Milton meant by the refuge they found in the catastrophe of their political hopes, we must turn to a nearer comparison of their two great poems of Heaven and Hell.

Immeasurably different in almost every other way, the *Commedia* and *Paradise Lost* have always challenged comparison for the sublime poetry which, in both, is won from a most reluctant and difficult subject-matter, the Christian Heavens and the Christian Hell. And this comparison is in reality one of immense and still unexhausted interest. For both poets lifted Heaven and Hell out of the category of poetic convention. The visionary journey to another world was a convention of medieval poetry, especially in Ireland, long before Dante; and long before Milton gods and demons had mingled, as indispensable machinery, in the epic fray. Dante created from that naïve legend a symbol, of overwhelming power, for the world-dilemma of good and ill. Milton forged from the 'machinery' of epic a symbol, only less tremendous, for the ways of God to man, and the ways of man to God.

Dante and Milton thus approached the poetry of Heaven and Hell by totally different routes; and it is at this point, where they most obviously challenge comparison, that we have most vividly recalled to us the gulf of time which divides them, and the stupendous

things which happened in the interval. *Paradise Lost* presupposes Protestantism, and it presupposes too that vast development of man's awareness of himself, of his history, and of his powers, which we call the Renaissance, or Humanism, of which Protestantism was, in some aspects, a special form.

How did these two great European movements, in both of which Milton was thus deeply rooted, affect his execution of what he himself felt to be his stupendous task—his song

That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme?

It must be replied that Milton's Protestantism, so far as it is a distinguishable influence, has on the whole damaged *Paradise Lost*; while his Humanism has, on the whole, supported and nourished its greatest qualities. Both Protestantism and Humanism destroyed as well as rebuilt; they blotted out all that was beautiful and glorious in Catholic tradition, and all that was sublime in the scholastic philosophy. Whatever new spiritual springs they opened, to see in Rome only the Scarlet Woman of Babylon, and in the great doctors of scholasticism who were Dante's masters only spinners of vain sophistry, meant an impoverishment of thought and knowledge which has palpably warped even the rich culture of Milton. On the other hand, the Humanist Renaissance, by recovering the splendid picture of Greek antiquity, with Plato, and Sophocles, and the dazzling beauty of the Homeric gods and heroes as its crown, had not only inspired such impassioned outbursts as Marlowe's address to Helen—'Was this the face that launched the thousand ships, and burned the topless towers of Ilion', or Hamlet's 'What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! . . . in action how like an angel! in apprehen-

sion how like a god!—it had not only inspired these and similar ecstatic utterances, it had permanently made the form and mind of man the measure and standard, when it was not the theme, of serious art. Among other consequences was the banishment from that art, even where it lingered in belief, of the grotesqueness, the ugliness, and foulness of the medieval Hell. And the great legislator of antiquity, Aristotle, had powerfully enforced this disposition when, in the one work which the age of Dante did not know, he treated poetry as an ‘imitation’ (however idealized) of men-in-action.<sup>1</sup>

Had Dante known the *Poetics*, with its pervading assumption that Homeric epic and Sophoclean tragedy are the only possible ways of great poetry, would he have designed the *Commedia* as he did? Probably; since his aim was not primarily to write a great poem, but to show the way to salvation here and hereafter. And we see with what sovereign security of judgement he sets aside, as irrelevant for his purpose, the work of the poet whom he hailed as the honour and the light of other poets, the book which had so long been the object of his devoted study.<sup>2</sup> Milton’s haughty self-esteem would never have permitted him to address even a great poet of antiquity in these terms of devout discipleship. But he is far too deeply rooted in the Renaissance to be able thus without effort or hesitation to set aside antique example. He had resolved to write a great poem which the world would not willingly let die, and both form and subject were long in doubt. But one point was fixed from the first; the great poem was to be one of the two kinds counted supreme by Aristotle—epic and tragedy—conceived as Aristotle conceived them. Milton’s poetic originality was perhaps not less than Dante’s,

<sup>1</sup> *Poetics*, § 2.

<sup>2</sup> Inf. i. 79 f. The *Aeneid*, as a whole, is not the less set aside because the *Commedia* is based upon one of its episodes.

but it showed itself in astonishing transformations of traditional classic forms, not in new creation. *Paradise Lost* is, in all essentials, a classical epic, with a hero who errs and suffers, a conflict in which divine beings take part, and a tragic catastrophe. Powerfully as Dante must have appealed to him, he can never for a moment have thought of 'imitating' his poem any more than he thought of imitating the poem of another poet whom he deeply honoured; a Protestant *Commedia* is as inconceivable from Milton as a Puritan *Faerie Queene*. For neither of these great poems was an epic in the classic sense; though the modern will be apt to say, in Dante's case, that this was because the conception of classic epic is transcended in that of a poem of which the 'hero' is not a man but humanity; in which the poet, instead of effacing himself, as Aristotle requires,<sup>1</sup> is in the centre of the picture throughout; and in which, instead of watching in suspense the vicissitudes of a great conflict of men or of peoples, we follow step by step the disclosure of the operation, in the universe, of eternal law.

## VI

How then did the Humanism and the Protestantism of Milton affect his presentation of Heaven and Hell? Roughly, by setting upon both the stamp of classical Humanism, and effacing the stamp of medieval Catholicism. The mind of Dante, we know, in many ways reached far beyond his medieval environment, to Humanist days and to our own, but not in this way. We must not be misled, by his ineffably beautiful reverence for Virgil, and for Virgil's beautiful style, from which he thought he had learnt his own, to suppose that he is Roman in temper. With unconscious irony he has made Virgil his guide through a Hell in which every

<sup>1</sup> *Poetics*, § 24.

trace of the Virgilian Hades has been replaced by the intenser horror, grotesqueness, and loathsomeness of the medieval Inferno; whereas Milton's Hell, though far from being Virgil's, is full of Virgilian reminiscence.

Almost as decisively as from the medieval Inferno, Milton turned away from the singular compromise between the medieval and classical Hell familiar to him in Tasso. The fiends of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* are in essence medieval devils disguised under the names and characteristics of the more monstrous figures of Greek myth :

'Here were to be seen a thousand foul Harpies, and a thousand Centaurs and Sphinxes, and pale Gorgons, hosts of greedy Scillas barking, Hydras and Pythons hissing, and Chimæras vomiting black sparks, and horrible Polyphemes and Geryons, and different semblances blended together in new monsters never seen or heard before.'<sup>1</sup>

Pluto sits in the midst, and he bears clear marks of the medieval devil : the great horns, the flaming eyes, and mouth foul with black blood, whence stench and dark blasts and sparks, and sulphurous fumes. He is also of colossal scale, so that Atlas and Calpe would seem small beside him.

But human dignity and grandeur are visibly struggling through these traits. The great horns rise from a 'great brow', the sign of intellect (reserved in medieval painting for saints). The awful (*orrida*) majesty of his *fero aspetto* heightens terror and his own pride; and his eye flashes venomously like a comet of ill omen ; the great beard descends tangled over his shaggy breast.

He is human, too, in his grief for the lost heaven ; and not as a place of physical satisfactions only; but for the golden sunlight, and the fair revolving stars (iv. 10). His oration to the assembled fiends has all the dignity of lofty counsel ; and his hearers too acquire the eleva-

<sup>1</sup> *G. L.* iv. 4 f.

tion of fallen angels. His opening words recall their former state :

‘Tartarean Powers, worthier to sit above the sun, your original seat.’

In these human touches Tasso’s tender nature anticipated Milton. And on the other hand, while discarding all the other monstrous traits of sub- or super-humanity, so carefully collected by Tasso, Milton has retained that of colossal scale (‘His staff, to equal which,’ . . .). Chateaubriand (*Génie du Christianisme*, iv. 9) thought this a regrettable lapse (‘Milton a eu un moment le mauvais goût de mesurer son Satan’), in a description which as a whole he thought unmatched by anything in Homer. And he contrasted both Dante and Tasso, to their great disadvantage, with Milton in this point :

‘L’imagination de Dante, épuisée (!) par neuf cercles de tortures, n’a fait de Satan enclavé au centre de la terre qu’un monstre odieux; le Tasso, en lui donnant des cornes, l’a presque rendu ridicule.’

In the same spirit Macaulay contrasted Dante’s devils, ‘ugly spiteful executioners’, with Milton’s glorious fiends. Dante’s position was, from a modern standpoint, naïve enough. The devils were embodiments of evil; they must therefore look like what they are; so he denudes them of every grace and charm, and makes them not only ugly, but loathsome. His Hell knows not only the poetic tortures of fire and ice, but the revolting ones of foul stenches and swallowed ordure. But even the indescribable grossness with which a devil takes himself off at the end of Canto XXX is not a blot on the exquisite delicacy of the poet; Dante laid a patch of black on his canvas simply because he was painting devils, and meant to paint them just as black as they were.

Clearly, however, this is not the method that controls

the artistry of *Comus* or of *Paradise Lost*. So jealous is Milton of the flawless beauty of his Masque, that 'the rout of Monsters' who follow Comus, and even the 'Country Dancers' who towards the close intervene with their rustic 'duck and nod', are kept out of the verse and disposed of in a line or two of contemptuous stage-direction; while Comus himself, the chief sinner, is clothed in every attribute of grace and brilliance. This first Miltonic devil has the fascination of his mother Circe, and the 'clustering locks with ivy berries wreathed' of his father Bacchus; he has the soul of music in him, as Milton himself had, and at the Lady's Song he forgets the mischief he is out for in that wonderful outburst:

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?  
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
To testify his hidden residence.  
How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
Of silence, thro' the empty-vaulted night,  
At every fall smoothing the raven down  
Of darkness till it smiled! . . .

In the lower logic of common sense, too, if not in the higher logic of the spirit, the pleading of Comus in the great temptation scene surpasses that of the radiant champion of Chastity herself. And when Milton, a quarter of a century later, gathered himself together to depict the powers of evil not contriving the harms in a gracious idyll, but frustrating the purposes of God in the creation of Man, he is no less remote from the medieval presentation of devilry. No one who reads Milton's vindication of the purity of his life can doubt that this Puritan abhorred evil as intensely as did the Catholic Dante. Something other than moral laxity must therefore be called in to explain how differently Satan, the author of evil in the world, and arch-rebel against God, fares at the hands of these two great poets.

They used the same legends and meant fundamentally the same thing. Why is it that Milton's Satan, though fallen from heaven, remains a magnificent embodiment of the heroic character, who compels us to think, not of any embodiment of evil, but of the Greek Prometheus, the champion of humanity tortured, like him, by a tyrannic and offended God? Why is his vindictive stubbornness glorified as that resolution never to despair or yield, which nerves the martyr and the patriot to endure to the end? Why, again, are our nerves never harrowed by the torments of this hell in which he is plunged? The 'penal fire' gives no light; but it also seems to give no pain; physical anguish is alluded to, not described; what tortures Satan, as it does Shelley's Prometheus, is 'the thought' of pain ever for ever, and this is less bitter than the thought of his 'lost happiness'.<sup>1</sup> But turn to Dante. His Satan is encountered at the end of their awful descent into the yawning City of Dis, frozen fast in the lowest depth of Hell, the 'Emperor of that dolorous realm'. And this ice, unlike Milton's flame, is real. Was ever a sudden horrible cold made more thrillingly real than by Dante's words: 'How icy chill and hoarse I became, ask not, O reader. . . . I did not die and did not remain alive; now think for thyself, if thou hast a grain of wit, what I became, being deprived both of death and life.'<sup>2</sup> And this Satan is ruthlessly despoiled of all the glory of his former state, not only of its 'excess'. Of 'his original brightness' his form retains not a trace. He is as ugly now, says Dante, as he was beauteous once. He has three faces, fiery red, whity-brown, and black, on the same head, and six wings like a bat's, and shaggy sides tangled and frozen, and he weeps with six eyes, and down three chins gush tears and bloody foam, for his three mouths champ three sinners—the most abhorred by Dante in the whole Inferno—Judas, Brutus, and

<sup>1</sup> *P. L.* i. 56 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* xxxiv. 22 f.

Cassius, the traitors to God and to God's vicegerent Caesar. Note in passing that Milton gives his archangel Raphael six wings ;<sup>1</sup> but this only marks once more the relative failure of Milton's art in heaven. His Satan neither has nor needs these decorations.

Now if we compare these pictures of Hell, we must recognize that the artistry of the Middle Ages has not, after all, succumbed to that of Humanism without much compensation. The Greek doctrine that as the deeds and sufferings of man are the proper matter of poetry, so the human form and personality, the most perfect that we know, ought to be the controlling type even in portraying supernatural beings, had the strength and also the weakness of the postulate that man is the measure of all things, on which it rests. Passion and thought, even in the gods, must be our passion and thought if they are to move us ; even the Hebraic Jahve, declaring to Job how unfathomable his ways are to human apprehension, must declare it in speech that not only finds access to the human intellect, but thrills it with 'sacred and home-felt delight'. And even more, the attempt to give outward shape to passion and thought like ours, or greater than ours, must borrow, if only as symbol, the human form divine. The three faces, with three champing mouths and six wings, are monstrosities which destroy the terribleness of Lucifer instead of multiplying it, as Dante meant, and are therefore, an artistic blunder provoked by his hate. Conversely, the one noble touch is that where, with his superb sense of justice, Dante tells us, in the midst of this picture of hideous torture, how the Stoic Brutus, possessing his soul as ever, traitor to Caesar though he was, uttered not a groan. And it is the glory of the *Inferno* that, though the tortures are real, as they are not in Milton's Hell, Dante again and again breaks free from the theological implications of his theme, and

allows the spirit of man to emancipate the victims from their doom, as when Farinata rears himself up in his icy pit, as if in scorn of Hell;<sup>1</sup> or when Ulysses, in the midst of the flame, remembers the great heartening words he had uttered to his desponding comrades, as he was leading them out on that last voyage to discover 'the unpeopled land towards the sunset'.<sup>2</sup>

Now the same emancipating spirit of man which lifts so many of Dante's eternally damned above the implications of their condition, has lifted Milton's entire Hell, with some reserves, out of the traditions of the medieval Inferno. Not only Satan, but his companions, are human warriors and counsellors of the grandest type. These fiends, in their frozen or fiery abode, hunt and climb, hold sports like the comrades of Aeneas, discuss philosophy like the Stoic academe; and the debate in Pandemonium is worthy of the loftiest achievements of the Roman Senate or the English Parliament, while Pandemonium itself is a pillared fabric like the Forum or the Parthenon.

Milton's classic humanism here found magnificent, and it may well be thought triumphant, expression. But one can imagine Dante saying to Milton in the after-world : 'Yes, your fiends are certainly more sublime and intellectual, and your Hell altogether more humane, more civilized, than mine. But do they express evil as intensely?' And Milton felt this himself. For he had the Hebrew hate of sin as well as the Greek passion for beauty, and instead of being brought into wonderful accord as they are in the vast synthetic soul of Dante, and the synthetic universe of the Comedy, these instincts jostle and contend and invade one another's territories. So Milton, after creating his glorious Satan, felt compunction lest the author of Evil should be taken for the hero of his great poem; and besides stripping him of his noble human form, and transforming him

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* x. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxvi. 112 f.

into a serpent, pursues him all through the later books of the poem with fierce abuse and reproof. But this was not the only disharmony which has left its mark in the great poem. Milton's Puritanism was not only at odds with his Hellenism, it was divided against itself. If its ethical and religious element, the Hebraic passion for righteousness, made for the degradation and humiliation of Satan, the political passion of the republican involuntarily ennobled and glorified the assertor of liberty against the enthroned despot in heaven, thus concurring, though from a different angle, with the poet and the Hellenist. The magnificence of Milton's style creates an aura of illusion in which these dissonances are scarcely perceived; but the psychological rifts they denote Milton never overcame.

## VII

But when he approached the problem of representing, not Hell, or Earth, but Heaven, not fiends or men, but the central mysteries and Persons of the Christian faith, both his Hellenism and his Protestantism were put to far severer tests. We might well imagine when we read the sublime prologue of *Paradise Lost*, or the yet more explicit Invocation at the opening of the Seventh Book, that Milton was in reality breaking free from the compelling magic of those antique poets, and that his song, pursuing 'things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme', would not only soar above the Aonian mount—the classical Parnassus—but would radically reject its inspiration. We seem to be listening to the trumpet-blast of one stepping out on an undiscovered shore; we think (as Milton himself obviously thought) of Lucretius, proclaiming with an ardour more ingenuously ecstatic than Milton's, that he is setting foot on the virgin soil of a new poetry, to cull flowers never worn on a poet's brow before. But the very phrasing of that

invocation betrays how conservative Milton's poetic radicalism really is. His 'heavenly' Muse, *Urania*, is no angel, but a true sister of the Nine; and the 'Aonian mount', though he soar above it, determines the locus of his path. It is the epic masters of Greece with whom he hopes to be equalled in renown.<sup>1</sup> So, in the Nativity Ode of his youth, you hear through all the eloquence of the young Christian, triumphing in the birth of Christ, the pathos of the scholar mourning with the Nymphs and Tyrian maids over the passing of the pagan world.

But was the Hellenic, or humanist, method of rendering the divine necessarily inadequate? We remember the Zeus of Phidias, the glorious Hermes of Praxiteles, and hesitate perhaps. Certainly the fundamental dilemma of reconciling divinity with anthropomorphism is not removed by any such examples. The infinite presence which the mystic apprehends, the something deeply interfused in Nature and in the mind of man, is not even distantly suggested by these radiant beings. Milton, no doubt, did not approach the divine by the mystic way at all. But he has lost needlessly in richness and depth of suggestion by clinging, we are tempted to say superstitiously, to the anthropomorphism of his Greek masters where a totally different poetic method, a bolder use of symbols, which do not denote but suggest, would have enabled him to capture more of those mysterious overtones which we hear so rarely in Milton's heaven. With this 'superstitious' fidelity to Hellenism—notwithstanding the lofty professions of his prologue—where Hellenism no longer avails, we cannot but contrast Dante's quiet but unquestioning dismissal of his beloved pagan Master when Virgil has performed

<sup>1</sup> Compare Dante's description (*Inf.* iv. 94 f.) of the five great ancient poets of his reckoning—Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan—welcoming him in limbo as the 'sixth' in their company. Of Lucretius he knew nothing. Carducci similarly enumerated five great Italian sonneteers—himself 'not sixth but last'.

his charge and reached the boundary of his power. Virgil passes out of the story at the gate of the Earthly Paradise, and Beatrice is henceforth Dante's guide, through a Paradise utterly alien in inspiration as in structure to the Virgilian Elysium. We shall see presently what this means.

In Milton's rendering of the divine we find the stamp certainly of great poetry and of profound religion. But both in a kind sharply contrasted with Dante's. His cosmic imagination was no less vast in compass ; the Miltonic universe is, even in mere scale, far vaster ; for the whole planetary system is there suspended like a drop from Heaven. None the less, its material bigness rather obstructs than contributes to its religious expressiveness ; its height and depth do separate us from that love of God of which Dante's universe is but the visible and articulate embodiment. Of the mystic intuition so richly possessed by the Vaughans and Crashaws of his time, Milton had not a trace ; and nothing of all that he writes so magnificently of the infinite and eternal God approaches Dante's vision in power of symbolizing that secure oneness under the shows and changes of the world which the mystic apprehends.

And unfortunately Milton does not, in this crucial part of his work, blind us by splendour of workmanship to these imperfections of his spiritual tools. It is just here that his Protestantism occasions the two gravest flaws in the whole poem—the argumentative ‘School-divine’ God; and the grotesque satiric cartoon of the Limbo of fools—the destined abode of the fatuous drift of the future world :

Embryos and idols, eremites and friars,  
Black, white, and grey, with all their trumpery.

Can this Limbo, on ‘the backside of the World’, beyond the planets and the fixed stars, really be the same place as Dante's Empyrean? When we reflect that the same

ascent through circling spheres which for Dante led to the presence and the immediate vision of God, leads for Milton to a kind of waste dumping-ground for all the human rubbish of the world, we have a measure—not, it is true, of any difference in the genius of the poets—but certainly of the decay which, a hundred years after Copernicus, had stricken that once magnificent mediæval dream of the circling heavens penetrated by the splendour of God.

And if his Protestantism here injures Milton's work, his Hellenism may be almost said to break in his hands. Certainly it fails to give his human God the full glory of humanity. The divine Father is irresolute; mercy and justice towards men strive in his countenance; he is like a man of two minds, not like Bacon's God, who sees, whole and indivisible, the truth men see in fragments and warring antitheses.

How unlike Dante, who with sublime daring made the eternal bliss of Paradise and the eternal torment of Hell equally the creation of the divine Love, a doctrine which shatters every anthropomorphic conception. Nor is there a trace of anthropomorphism in the vision of God which Dante himself at the close of his great poem attained. There is no voice nor sound, such as Hebrew prophets had ascribed to their Jahve when he passed by in the storm or rebuked the questioning of Job. Divine exhortations, much more explanations of the divine attributes, could not, for Dante, even in figure, be ascribed to God Himself. All that is told of God before his supreme vision is told by the mouth of saints and apostles, or by the inspired lips of Beatrice. Only one of the senses is allowed to provide a symbol for the divine nature, as Dante understood it—the sense by which we receive the first-created 'offspring of God', the splendour of light which penetrates the universe; the splendour by which ~~mystical~~ seers have constantly sought to express the ineffable; the Light to which

Milton, to whom it would never more return, addressed his majestic adoration as he prepared to tell, less worthily, of the debate in heaven.<sup>1</sup> And Milton himself uses this image when he makes the angels address God as:

Fountain of light, thyself invisible  
 Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st  
 Throned inaccessible.<sup>2</sup>

But this God, who '*sits throned*', is already made 'accessible' and familiar in a fashion which seems almost profane when we set it beside the awful absoluteness of Dante's God as conveyed to us by Dante's symbol. Many others had conceived a God who is infinite, beyond time and space, transcending the universe, but also immanent in it; but the empty negations in which they sought to express this absolute nature left the mind cold. Dante found a symbol of an intensity which creates a soul under the ribs of these abstract negations, and compels us to see that his God is only aloof from all the determinations of human existence because He is at the heart of reality, and that He is beyond Time and Space only because He is the concentrated essence of every *Where* and every *When*. And what is this symbol? A point of dazzling light, 'so small that the smallest star would seem a moon beside it',<sup>3</sup> but radiating splendour through the universe. It is introduced, not as Milton introduces his God, as the object of a hymn of adoring angels, but in one of those homely images which at every step, even in the *Paradiso*, almost persuade us that Dante is telling us of what happened to him, not of what he had dreamed :

'As in the mirror a taper's flame, kindled behind a man, is seen of him ere itself be in his sight or thought, and he turns back to see whether the glass speak truth to him, and finds that it accords as music with its time, . . . so it chanced to me, gazing upon the beauteous eyes of Beatrice; and when I turned, and

<sup>1</sup> *P.L.* iii. 1 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 375 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxviii. 16 f.

mine own were smitten by the glory of heaven, . . . a point I saw which rayed forth light so keen that the eye it flamed upon must needs close because of its strong poignancy.'

Dante cannot yet bear the intolerable splendour ; he is not yet qualified for the supreme vision. By gradual steps, which heighten our suspense of expectation, that crowning experience, the goal of all his longings, is approached. It is Bernard, the saint of ecstatic contemplation, who guides and supports him when—'clothed in the glory of Mary as the morning star in the glory of the sun' <sup>1</sup>—his eyes, at length purged of illusion, begin to penetrate further and further into the deep light which is very truth. Nor does it now blind him; on the contrary, his sight has become so at one with that eternal radiance that it would have been blinded had he turned away. The vision was momentary. But memory, divinely reinforced, made him aware by the throb of an ampler joy (91-3) that he had seen in the depths of that light—the scattered leaves of the universe gathered into one book by Love ; all existences and their attributes and relations fused, as it were, together in a single flame, the universal essence of all Being. And as his mind hangs suspended on that inner vision, from which it is utterly incapable of turning away, it penetrates deeper yet and discerns in the Innermost that for which speech is as an infant's babble—but which his stammering tongue can only call three Circles, distinct in colour, equal in dimensions, of which the Second seemed to reflect the First, but also to bear within it the semblance of the human form. How can the circle and the image, the divine and the human, consort? He grapples vainly with the mystery like a geometer striving to square the circle. For he is there to learn not absolute Truth, but perfect Will ; and in the irradiating flash which smites his brain, that Will is born. The vision breaks, for

<sup>1</sup> *Par. xxxii. 106.*

power to sustain it fails. But already all desire is at one with the Love which moves the sun and the other stars.

In this great closing and culminating scene of the *Comedy*, Dante has reached the heights both of religion and poetry. He had the soul of both in him. In his poet's imagination the universe was mirrored with unapproached intensity and articulateness. The circling spheres of heaven, and the crowded pages of history, were all reflected there. But this living and moving universe was the figured veil of a spaceless and timeless infinity, whose robe of reflected splendour man could ecstastically contemplate, but whose mysterious being he could never, save in a great imagined experience like this, approach. This is Dante's God,—the God of Catholic theology, released from the abstract formulas of the schools by the transfiguring imagination of a sublime poet and the awestruck reticence of a great mystic; so as to become at once more overwhelming and more impalpable, more all-pervading and more utterly unapproachable, behind the half-revealing, half-veiling symbol.<sup>x</sup>

## VIII

From these striking divergences let us turn to a point, more fundamental, but less often if ever noticed, in which the two great poems converge. What is their underlying purpose? What are they *about*? Each poet has told us plainly. The *Divine Comedy* is the story of how Dante, baffled by the failure of the State to govern and of the Church to guide, was shown by Virgil 'another way' to the lost Paradise of earthly happiness, and finally by Beatrice to the heaven of eternal welfare. Its aim, as Dante tells us, was to show how men at large might thus escape from misery in this life, and win

<sup>x</sup> Dante's symbol of the point of intense light was perhaps suggested by St. Augustine's description in the *Confessions* (vii. 10) of the mysterious eye of the soul as it gazes on the light that never changes.

happiness hereafter. He shows it by revealing, with an intensity and range of power unapproached in poetry elsewhere, the nature of good and evil, and what the choice between them means. And Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in its final effect if not in original intention, is an intimation, also, to the ruined army of Puritanism, that there was another way which the individual soul could traverse by its own insight and resolution alone. His subject gave no help here; for the legend of Eden is a tragedy of moral failure and outer ruin—the very opposite of Dante's glorious ascent from the gates of Hell to the heights of Paradise. But through the pessimism of the legend there blows an impalpable wind of fortifying hope and heroic resolve, felt henceforth by every combatant in a forlorn but divine cause. We cannot compare this impalpable breath with the magnificent spiritual armour fashioned for the whole world by Dante. But is there no parallel intention? Consider a moment two memorable Scenes in the two poems.

At the brink of the Earthly Paradise Virgil, unable to guide him further, takes leave of Dante. It is a kind of emancipation; Dante, until the coming of Beatrice, is authorized to be guided by his own judgement and assured that it will guide him right.

'Free, sound and upright is thy will, and it were an error not to follow it; wherefore I crown and mitre thee king and bishop of thyself.'<sup>1</sup>

To the modern reader this is one of the most thrilling moments in the whole *Comedy*, and we may be sure that Milton, who had struck such formidable blows at kings and bishops, found it as stirring as we. And I think that Milton remembered that sublime parting and those parting words when he planned that other farewell scene, the parting of Adam and Michael at the gates of Eden near the close of *Paradise Lost*. Led by Michael,

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxvii. 140 f.

whom he repeatedly addresses as his 'Guide' (xi. 371, 674), Adam too has climbed a hill to the highest point of Paradise whence he is about to be driven; there he has the vision of the future of the newly created world. Adam instantly grasps the meaning of what he sees; his inner vision has been purified, and he knows how the Paradise lost by disobedience can be regained by heroic suffering for Truth's sake. To which Michael replies:

This having learned, thou hast attained the sum  
Of wisdom; hope no higher, tho' all the stars  
Thou knew'st by name . . . only add  
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith,  
Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,  
By name to come called Charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loth  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
'A Paradise within thee, happier far.'<sup>1</sup>

His 'one bad act', he is expressly told, he may 'cover by many good'. Adam may in fact redeem himself. He too is, in being expelled, at the same time emancipated, and made, like Dante in the Earthly Paradise, king and bishop over himself.

We must not push these suggestions, or these parallels, too far. Milton beyond question believed in the Redemption by Christ; Paradise was lost for Man until a greater Man restore us and regain the blissful seat. And Dante's emancipation was a limited emancipation valid only until the coming of Beatrice. But the words of great poets are apt to be pregnant with larger meanings than they express or intend. The conviction that man in the last resort must *choose* his faith is not contained in Dante's words, but it is not foreign to them. And the way in which Milton has handled that regaining of Paradise in his second poem may well warn us

<sup>1</sup> P.L. xii. 575 f.

that the doctrine of Christ's Atonement for Man on the Cross did not appeal to the deepest part of Milton's nature or to his most passionate faith.<sup>1</sup> Christ there wins Paradise not by his death but by a victorious conflict between his nobler reason, in obedience to God, and the seductions to appetite and ambition offered by Satan.<sup>2</sup> It is a victory such as every man is daily called to achieve. And Milton sees behind the figure of his Jesus the whole great company of saintly men, who similarly by conscience, fortified and illuminated by divine grace, had conquered in that struggle. For his larger faith, Paradise is regained by Greater Man, indeed, by holy souls, as he says in the great prose Treatise on Christian Doctrine, 'of widely separated countries and of all ages from the foundation of the world'. Man, in other words, for Milton, must be saved by Humanity. The framework of the doctrine of the Fall and the Redemption stands intact in his mind, but its implication, the radical badness of fallen human nature, is undermined by the invincible faith which Humanism had restored to Christianity, that human nature, being created by God, cannot be radically bad; that matter itself, and thence 'the flesh', was created by God out of his own nature, and must thence be divine.<sup>3</sup> Milton does not break into Hamlet's ecstasy over this wondrous piece of work, Man, and this goodly frame the earth; but working wholly with theological arguments, and supporting his assertions at every step on biblical texts, he arrives at a view as fully emancipated as Shakespeare's from the medieval condemnation of matter, and even foreshadow-

<sup>1</sup> This seems to me the extent to which we can admit the view of Liljegren, *Studies in Milton*, 1918, that Milton was essentially a man of the Renaissance, Christian only in name. Neither Milton nor seventeenth-century religion can be disposed of by these summary formulas.

<sup>2</sup> Saurat, *La Pensée de Milton*, 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, p. 180 (Bohn): 'Matter . . . proceeded incorruptible from God; and even since the fall it remains incorruptible in essence.'

ing, as Shakespeare does not, the modern conception of a continuous evolution from the lowest forms of being to the highest. It is not that he had a trace of scientific interest or vision ; his thinking was utterly aloof from that of Bacon or Hobbes. He was simply a poet, with a poet's instinct for discovering everywhere, by whatever name he call it, the divine ; and a fearless Christian thinker, who dared to draw logical conclusions from St. Paul's assertion 'that of God, and through Him, and to Him, are all things'.<sup>1</sup> Dante in the same spirit, and with the security of his medieval faith, had quoted even Lucan's assertion that 'Jupiter is all that thou seest and whithersoever thou movest'.<sup>2</sup> So the created world, as described by Raphael to Adam, is not only a collection of radically diverse kinds, but a 'gradual scale' up which every order of being strives to ascend, and does ascend.<sup>3</sup>

So from the root

Springs lighter the green stalk ; from thence the leaves  
 More aerie ; last the bright consummate flower  
 Spirits odorous breathes ; flowers and their fruit  
 (Man's nourishment) by gradual scale sublimed  
 To vital spirits aspire, to animal,  
 To intellectual ; give both life and sense,  
 Fancy, and understanding ; whence the Soul  
 Reason receives ; and reason is her being.

Thus 'body up to spirit works' ; for Milton, as for Tyndall two centuries later, 'matter' held the promise and the potency of life, and of life in its highest spiritual reach.

Thus the great poem which Milton gave to the English people in what he thought, and we shall hardly dissent, one of the darkest hours of its spiritual life, was grounded on an implicit faith in the power of man to reach the heights of being. This faith is not proclaimed, it was hardly perhaps consciously formulated ; but it

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist. x.*

<sup>3</sup> *P. L. v.* 469 f.

breathes like a subtle uplifting atmosphere through the framework of dogma, tacitly altering its complexion and accent.

And this faith in man's power of unlimited spiritual advance was the presumption and the basis of all that Milton had to say to his people in their present catastrophe.

It was, and had always been, the ground of his demand for liberty in Church and State; for the liberty he claimed was liberty to follow the leading of his inner light, without interference or compulsion. The conviction that man, left unconstrained, would, through trial and error, follow the lead, inspired the *Areopagitica*. The decade of momentous political experience which divides the *Areopagitica* from the close of *Paradise Lost* left Milton perhaps less assured of the capacity of 'God's Englishman' for self-guidance than of old. Bitter jibes at the multitude escape him; and his last desperate plan for a republican government, on the eve of the Restoration, is the reverse of democratic.

But the overthrow of outer political liberty could never touch the inner liberty of the choosing spirit. Comus cannot touch the freedom of the Lady's mind, with all his charms,

altho' this corporal rind  
Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good.

Nor can Church and State in league

unbuild

[God's] living temples, built by faith to stand,  
Their own faith, not another's.

For 'true liberty', as Michael tells Adam,

always with right reason dwells

Twinned, and from her hath no ~~dividual~~<sup>separate</sup> being.<sup>1</sup>

To fail in that freedom of right reason, of disciplined

<sup>1</sup> P. L. xii. 83 f.

obedience to a divine command, was to incur Milton's impassioned scorn. Adam had so failed, and the very place and scene of that failure, the Paradise he had betrayed, is visited with that scorn. Dante shows us the Paradise to which he is led by Virgil, arrayed in all the blissful loveliness of the Paradise which Adam lost. Dante certainly did not imagine the Italy he longed for and laboured to shape, as at all like the Earthly Paradise he described. But he accepted it as a symbol of the beauty and the guarded security of his ideal. Whereas Milton, bent on making clear that the new Paradise, when won, would be not only better than the old but utterly unlike it, dismisses Eden as a vain and useless remnant:<sup>1</sup>

pushed by the horned flood  
 With all his verdure spoiled, and trees adrift,  
 Down the great River, to the opening Gulf,  
 There to take root, an island salt and bare,  
 The haunt of seals, and orcs, and sea-mews clang,—  
 To teach thee that God attributes to place  
 No sanctity, if none be thither brought  
 By men who there frequent or therein dwell.

## IX

The divergence, slight as it seems, is one of those that often provide a clue to the profoundest distinctions in the temper and make of genius. Milton, with all his massiveness and range of mind, is a radical of genius and faith, pushing on to the things that are before and rejecting, often with contumely, the things that are behind. Dante too looks before, but with a yet more devoted gaze he looks behind, and giving his life to the task of bringing cosmos out of the chaos of his country, yet conceives the cosmos as the restoration of a shattered harmony, the building up once more of the spoiled and ravaged City of God. Both men had, to a degree hardly

<sup>1</sup> P. L. xi. 831 f.

paralleled in modern poetry, the prophetic fire, and Dante's fire blasted with even more deadly effect than Milton's the evil things he assailed. But Dante had also, and in yet more surpassing measure, the sympathetic and synthetic imagination which enables a poet of the Sophoclean or Shakespearian type, so far as we can judge, to bring all the elements of a vast culture harmoniously together, to 'see life thoroughly and to see it whole'. It is clear, indeed, that this synthetic unification of experience, so impressive in the *Divine Comedy*, was immeasurably more difficult for a Puritan scholar of the seventeenth century than for a Catholic of the fourteenth. The universe, as interpreted by the Catholic philosophy in which Dante grew up, was already an ordered whole. The elements of future disruption were still latent and innocuous. Aristotle had been built into the fabric of Catholic doctrine. The Roman empire had prepared the cradle for the Church; Christ and Moses did not yet 'clash'. The Earth, still circled by the Sun and the other stars, did not yet 'move'. For an English Puritan scholar of Milton's time, a synthesis so comprehensive was impossible. He had access to domains of experience unknown to Dante or Aquinas; he saw more clearly some things in the domain they knew. But his vaster field was illumined by cross and conflicting lights. Humanism and religion, man and God, antiquity and the modern world, were no longer elements in an ordered whole but centres of unresolved contradiction. By substituting belief in the letter of the Bible for belief in the Church, Protestantism, whatever advantage it gained in other ways, drove a fissure between Christian and antique thought which for Dante did not exist. Hence Milton's allegiance to Scripture and antiquity is an uneasy and never completely reconciled compromise, whereas Dante, with complete consistency and unclouded serenity, can present himself as at once the follower of Virgil the

supreme poet, the disciple of Aristotle, 'master of those who know', and the servant of Christ. Milton, standing where he did, could not have escaped these dissonances ; but they were accentuated in him by a deficiency in the imaginative sympathy in which Dante, with all his dogmatic limitations, was so rich, and with which lesser contemporaries of his own, like Donne, and Sir Thomas Browne, were more abundantly endowed than he. In prophetic grandeur Milton at his highest is unsurpassed. But it is the grandeur of a lonely prophet, of a voice in the wilderness, inspired by God only, of a star that dwells apart. Whereas the prophetic grandeur of Dante is that of one who, if his voice has for the time no echo, knows that he is choragus of an unnumbered multitude, that he has on his side all history and all knowledge, the nature of Man, and the Love that made and moves the universe. The sustained magnificence of *Paradise Lost* was meant for an audience fit but few ; the *Comedy*, charged with a message for humanity, was adapted to the *loquutio vulgaris in qua mulierculae communicant*, and reaches the heights of poetry in lines and phrases of ineffable simplicity.

And Milton, with all that commanding force which makes us wish that he were living at this hour, to stir this fen of stagnant waters ; which makes us feel that we must be free or die who hold his faith ;—Milton with all this is a lesser spirit than Dante ; in part because Protestantism, it may be, in its historic compass and richness, is less than Catholicism, and because this inferiority is not outweighed by the superior range and freedom of Milton's Humanist outlook. Dante won the reward which belongs to those whose whole being is set upon the things that go to the root of life : however perishable the materials which he built into his work, it remains and will remain ; though his outer life was a ruin, and his citizenship a hunger and thirst for duties denied him, and his speculation thridded with

untenable propositions, yet the soul of Dante emerges from those fragments and failures a marvel of rounded completeness, rich alike in the fruit it garners up and in the seed it scatters. Well might Dante's most kindred spirit among Italians, Michelangelo, cry : 'The work of Dante and his noble aim were ignored by that ungrateful people among whom all prosper but the just. Yet were I only in his place ! Had I been born to a like fate—

To have his bitter exile, and his worth,  
I'd give the lot most blessed upon earth'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rime*: Sonnetto XXXI: A Dante Alighieri.

## A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE'S INFLUENCE ON THE CONTINENT

Introduction; Shakespeare's Influence on the Continent a part of the history of European civilization. § I. Regional limits. Outstanding importance of France, Germany, Russia. Limit of date. Virtual beginning 1730. Traces of Shakespeare on the Continent in the seventeenth century. Latin Europe. Scandinavia. Differentiation produced by different national conditions. And by the varying appeal of different aspects of Shakespeare's work, p. 116. § II. The intellectual movement of Europe between 1700 and 1830. The reaction from 'reason' to 'imagination': symptoms of the change in philosophy, criticism, poetry; the discovery of Shakespeare stimulates and accelerates this movement. Three phases of his influence, bearing on the recovery of the Past, the 'renascence of wonder', the creation of character, p. 123. § III. History: Shakespeare's Histories. Germany, GOETHE: *Goëtz von Berlichingen*, *Egmont*; SCHILLER: *Wallenstein*, p. 127. § IV. Russia, p. 134. § V. France, Restoration period. Historians and Romantic poets. VITET, MÉRIMÉE, HUGO, p. 136. § VI. 'Renascence of Wonder.' Different fortunes of the supernaturalism of the Tragedies and of the Comedies. HERDER, the German Romantics, their insight into Shakespeare's language, and into his folk-lore. The science of folk-lore. Their interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 139. § VII. French Romanticism. MUSSET's Comedies, p. 147. § VIII. Character creation. Germany. Personality in German culture, poetry and philosophy. In 'Sturm und Drang'. SCHILLER and GOETHE. Character as Fate, the tragic point of view. *Macbeth* and *Wallenstein*. *Hamlet* and *Werther*. Hamlet in Russia, BJELINSKI; TURGENJEV, p. 150. § IX. Shakespearian Character in the Romantics, German and French, p. 161. § X. Conclusion, p. 164.

'Les influences étrangères, à qui l'on fait une gloire ou un crime, suivant les points de vue, de "libérer" ou de "dévoyer" une littérature, n'agissent jamais que dans une direction conforme aux tendances de celle-ci. Elles nous informent de nous, et, selon le mot de Pascal, "elles nous font part de notre bien".'

F. BALDENSPERGER, *Gaëthe en France*, p. 3.

THE history of Shakespeare's influence on the Continent has long been recognized as something of far larger import than a record of the successes, however phenomenal, of an English writer, however great. It is

part of the history of Europe, of the history of civilization, of the history of the processes by which the entire complex of modern beliefs and ideals were evolved; processes in which the work of Shakespeare was not merely an accompanying circumstance but a contributing factor. So intimately did this unexhausted leaven of far-off Elizabethan imagination blend with the currents of thought and passion in the spiritual centres of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century that a history of the relations of Shakespeare with the German mind has become scarcely distinguishable from a history, during this period, of the German mind itself; while a survey of the phases of French opinion about Shakespeare only becomes completely intelligible in the light of the larger transformations of the society and literature of France.<sup>1,2</sup> In a less degree the influence of Shakespeare was a factor in the nineteenth-century evolution of the culture of Russia.

## I

The history of Shakespeare on the Continent is, in substance, the history of the interpretations he underwent and the reactions he awakened in the mind of the three great but profoundly diverse peoples who occupy

<sup>1</sup> Gundolf, *Sh. und der deutsche Geist*, 1917; Baldensperger, *Esquisse d'une Histoire de Shakespeare en France*. Both these brilliant and penetrating studies have been of great value to the present essay. Lirondelle's slighter *Shakespeare en Russie* has also been of use. Prof. Robertson's account of 'Shakespeare on the Continent' in *Camb. Lit. Hist.*, vol. v, p. 283 f., gives an admirable orientation of the whole field. I may call attention also to the monograph 'Shakespeare in Poland', the first of a series of similar studies for other countries, recently issued by the Shakespeare Association.

<sup>2</sup> The following sentence of M. Baldensperger, u.s., p. 215, well illustrates this fact: 'les seules époques qui ont vu applaudir avec persistance des pièces offrant . . . la désinvolture du répertoire shakesperien —l'âge de 1795—1805 avec le mélodrame, la période 1826—1835 avec le drame romantique—sont celles qui recrutent parmi des couches sociales nouvelles une importante portion du public.'

its central belt between the Bay of Biscay and the Urals. The Latin peoples of the South of Europe have taken their Shakespeare from France, the Dutch and Scandinavian North, and Poland, from France and Germany; the Slavonic South-east from Russia. And in these derivative regions the reactions have been on the whole tardy and slight. No Spaniard read even a single play in his own tongue before 1772, when Cruz translated *Hamlet*—from the French.<sup>1</sup> And no Italian is known to have mentioned him in print till Antonio Conti, who had lived two years in the England of George I without learning how to spell his name, described the *Julius Caesar* of ‘Sasper’ in the preface to his own *Il Cesare*, 1726.<sup>2</sup> In the Scandinavian North the Germanic poet won a far more spontaneous and sustained renown. But the author of the most conspicuous Scandinavian book on Shakespeare, Georg Brandes, was a disciple of Taine; and the great dramatist who alone in the nineteenth century produced work comparable with Shakespeare’s, owed little to him.<sup>3</sup>

The history of his influence begins in France in the early thirties of the eighteenth century. The few traces of Shakespeare on the Continent before 1730 are derived from one or other of two thin trickles of information, of quite distinct origin, which probably never met. Companies of ‘English Comedians’ acted several of his plays in Germany, Holland, and elsewhere, up to the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. Directly or indirectly, parts of the *Midsummer-Night’s Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew* were imitated in one or both these countries before the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> The first-known mention of Shakespeare’s name in print, in a

<sup>1</sup> Fitzmaurice Kelly, *Hist. de la litt. espagnole*, p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, *Genesis of Romantic Theory*, p. 96 f.

<sup>3</sup> Ibsen’s *Kongsemnerne* is referred to below, § IV.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, ‘Shakespeare on the Continent’, *Camb. Lit. Hist.*, v.

German educational work, 1682, probably reflects this German current. Under wholly different circumstances Shakespeare's name percolated into France in the middle years of that century. The English courtiers who fled there in 1642, or later, did not forget the shows at White-hall. If they did not bring with them to Paris the copy of the First Folio which found its way into the King's Library, and on which his librarian wrote the first-known continental judgement upon Shakespeare,<sup>1</sup> they assuredly carried in their pockets many of those quartos of the separate plays which a Paris inventory later priced for sale at one sou each.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the century, the French immigrations into England and Holland after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and then the essays of Collier, Temple, and Addison, slowly diffused the knowledge of his work, though his formidable name was still 'Sasper' for Bodmer as well as for Conti.

The history, then, of Shakespeare in European culture dates from the second generation of the eighteenth century only. Voltaire's dealings with the 'barbarian of genius' began with his *Mort de Brutus* (1730), and the memorable eighteenth chapter of his *Lettres sur les Anglais* (1734) secured to Shakespeare thenceforth the respect, if not as yet the homage, of cultivated Europe.

His subsequent fortunes in the several countries were sharply differentiated by the diversities of race, nationality, and historic culture which conditioned his reception and his power. In Latin Europe outside France he has won on the whole, as already noticed, only the homage of a distant and barren admiration.

In France, where a brilliant native gift for the theatre

<sup>1</sup> This does not include the casual pronouncements of foreign visitors in London upon the plays they saw on the stage.

<sup>2</sup> Baldensperger, *u.s.*, p. 156. This fact tells us more about the 'reputation' of Shakespeare under Louis XIV than the judgement which we owe to Nicholas Clément's erudite curiosity.

was associated, until far on in the nineteenth century, with a rigid and despotic theatrical technique, the discovery of a dramatist who irresistibly appealed to the one and completely traversed the other, excited from the first a sharp division of opinion. Voltaire, himself a man of letters of the first order, who brought to the 'rules' a loyalty refused to everything else but the victims of tyranny, was drawn both ways, and his violently fluctuating pronouncements may almost all be described as variations on a single paradoxical formula, of which now one and now the other element was emphasized. His description of Shakespeare in the *Lettres sur les Anglais*,<sup>1</sup> as 'a genius full of force and fecundity but without the least spark of good taste', offered a loose and illogical compromise which qualified it to become, as it did, the orthodox doctrine of the average French public. But from the outset there were Frenchmen who hailed the 'genius' of Shakespeare, with at most a formal recognition of his 'incorrectness'. Addison's essays in the *Spectator* carried English Shakespeare criticism by way of Holland all over the Continent. The abbé Pré-vost, who had lived in England, 'knew nothing in Greek or French superior to *Hamlet* and several other English plays'.<sup>2</sup> Voltaire himself was at first carried away by the power of Shakespeare on the London stage, and he could even deride French tragedy as 'usually a series of conversations in five acts, with a love-intrigue', whereas English is 'a genuine action'.<sup>3</sup> *Julius Caesar* powerfully impressed him as a tragedy without the 'gallantry' which Corneille had never failed to introduce.<sup>4</sup> He 'preferred this monstrous spectacle to the long confidences of cold love, and still colder political reasoning'. But after his return to France, the prestige of the national art resumed its sway over the great emancipator, and his own

<sup>1</sup> 1734, Lettre xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted Baldensperger, *u.s.*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161, from the *Essai sur la poésie épique*, 1727.

<sup>4</sup> Preface to *La Mort de Jules César*.

Shakespearian borrowings were futile efforts to enrich its substance without surrendering its form. For a generation after the 'Philosophical Letters', the two contending currents of opinion agitated literary France. From the seventies onward, the vogue of Shakespeare, powerfully promoted by the essays of Sébastien Mercier (1773-78), and the translations of Letourneur (1776), rapidly gained ground, and the violent diatribes of Voltaire's reactionary old age were impotent to arrest it. With the dawn of the new century Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël heralded the advent of Romanticism, and under the aegis of Hugo, Shakespeare enjoyed in the city of Racine a magnificent but unstable triumph. With the passing of Romanticism, towards 1850, Shakespeare virtually disappeared from the French stage, but found increasing response from the quick and fertile imagination of France in other regions of art.

In striking contrast with this chequered story of contending enthusiasms and inhibitions is the history of Shakespeare in Germany. Though twenty years behind France in effectually discovering him,<sup>1</sup> when she did discover him it was with the rapture of a captive welcoming a liberator, or, as Goethe said, of one born blind who has suddenly received his sight. From Lessing's defiant challenge, in 1759, to French classicism and its German disciples, onward, we have to do, not with the successive phases of a prolonged conflict between enthusiasts and sceptics, but with different ways of interpreting the splendour of the new planet which has swum into German ken. The word 'genius', universally called into use, no longer means rude untutored power, devoid of taste. If Lessing saw in it a sublime faculty of reason, and Gerstenberg a brilliant sensuous visualizing power, and Herder elemental insight and passion, they all found the consummate example of

<sup>1</sup> She was the first to translate a play of Shakespeare, Borck's *Der Tod des Julius Cäsar*, 1741. But this had no sequel for several years.

what they meant in Shakespeare. From Schiller and the great Schlegel-Tieck translation onwards, he became an integral possession of the German people, a living portion, it is scarcely too much to say, of the German mind.

Russia, finally, with a no less powerful individuality of her own, but dominated throughout the eighteenth century first by French and then by German prestige, found in Shakespeare, at length, an instrument of emancipation from both. Her powerful concrete imagination, destined to such magnificent achievement in the Novel, rose finally in peremptory revolt against the abstractions alike of French classicism and of German metaphysics;<sup>1</sup> insisting that characters in drama ought to be neither ideal types nor symbols of ideas, but individuals, as they were in Shakespeare. But this emancipation can hardly be dated before 1820. Throughout the eighteenth century Shakespeare was abundantly translated, paraphrased and discussed, he was imitated by the Empress Catherine, and lovingly studied by the historian Karamzine. It was only with the advent of Pushkin and Lermontov and Alexis Tolstoy that Shakespeare could fledge the wings of a man of genius.<sup>2</sup>

But it is necessary to discriminate further. Shakespeare's vogue not only followed very divergent curves in these different national communities, it attached itself, at different times, in the history of the same community, to different parts of Shakespeare's work. At the outset mere fragments of him were known, and

<sup>1</sup> "The French", wrote Bjelinski in 1838, "think that the ideal is a collection of traits of a single idea scattered throughout nature. . . . Shakespeare is the absolute contrary of this pitiful theory." Bjelinski, *Hamlet, drama Šekspira . . . Works*, i. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Pushkin, in 1826, was overheard by a friend abusing German critics who saw 'le diable sait quoi dans Shakespeare, alors que celui-ci dit simplement, sans finesse, sans s'embarrasser de théories, ce qu'il a sur le cœur, en moujik (*peasant*) de génie.' Quoted Lirondelle, u.s., p. 146.

when the whole, in very faulty translations,<sup>1</sup> became at length accessible, the inherent diversities of its different parts in quality of appeal at once asserted themselves. The great situations of the Tragedies were the monumental façade of the immortal edifice, uniformly conspicuous everywhere and at all times; the English Histories, the romantic comedies, the fairy dramas, had the capricious and fluctuating lustre of opals, now obscure and unnoticed, now, with some change in the light or in the spectator's point of view, appearing to be the very focus of its splendour.

Even his own country and his own age had not responded equally to all the many moods of his art. The wayward loveliness of *Cymbeline* did not prevent its speedy and complete neglect; *Henry IV* was known as the comedy of Falstaff; and Caliban and Bottom probably did more for the success of their respective plays than Prospero or the Fairies. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's Elizabethan audiences showed a relative catholicity in their apprehension of his poetry which has never been equalled since. In the eighteenth century, until we near its closing decades, the robust, and versatile Elizabethan joy in poetry was nowhere to be found in civilized Europe. Poetry itself was a shy elusive spirit, faintly piping from the fields and hills to a Brockes or a Dyer, or from the fairy-tale to a Perrault. The Elizabethan discriminations had now become peremptory yeas and nays. The enormous story interest of *Hamlet* or *Richard III* could overcome the inertia of the most prosaic audience; but the romantic comedies only lived where, as in England, they could command the services of a series of great actresses. For Voltaire, the pioneer, Shakespeare was the author of *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*,

<sup>1</sup> In French, La Place (1745), a partial translation of ten plays, with abstracts of the rest; in German, Wieland's in prose (1762-6). In Russian, only *Hamlet* and *Othello* had been translated, in prose, before the end of the eighteenth century.

*Othello*, and few of the Histories. He had doubtless seen one or more of the Comedies in London ; but it is Wycherley and Congreve, not Shakespeare, who in the 'Letters on the English' stand for English Comedy. And throughout the French eighteenth century it is the tragic Shakespeare who is admired and derided, and Corneille and Racine, not Molière, with whom he is compared. The Histories early excited interest ; but it was only with the generation of Hugo, Mérimée, and Musset that the Histories and the Comedies won a vogue in France, and then their fecundating power was felt less in the theatre than among the historians and the poets. The more precocious Shakespeare-worship of Germany was equally far from Shakespearian catholicity. Lessing, like Voltaire, measured him only with Corneille, and his judgement was probably grounded on even slenderer knowledge, and (to judge from his own plays) an intellectual sympathy not greatly superior. The English Histories and *Julius Caesar* inspired the first attempts to dramatize the German past ; the great tragedies kindled the imagination of Herder, but in virtue of those very glimpses into the sombre and awful mythology of the north which had from the first imperilled their vogue in France. Finally came the German Romantics declaring the fairy dramas to be the real Shakespeare, the key to all the rest, and out of their fruitful illusions grew the German science of folk-lore.

In Russia the vital history of Shakespeare is almost exclusively concerned with the great tragedies, and the Histories which most approach tragedy in character.

## II

A mere list of the names of the men who figure in the European discovery of Shakespeare would indicate that we have to do with issues more far-reaching than the comparative valuation of a foreign poet. It was not of their attitude to Shakespeare that Carlyle was thinking

when in the person of Teufelsdröckh he invited his respected Herr von Voltaire to close his mouth, 'for the work appointed thee seems finished', and summoned his readers to open their Goethe, and learn there the saving wisdom of life. Nor was it in dramatic matters at all that Goethe himself (who put Voltaire's *Mahomet* on the Weimar stage) most clearly betrayed the spiritual gulf which separated them, but rather when he was denouncing the Newtonian physics (first expounded to the Continent by the pioneer of Shakespeare) and rapturously hailing the evolutionary doctrines of Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. The four generations from 1700 to 1830 witnessed fundamental modifications of the mentality of civilized Europe, as reflected alike in its articulate thought, and in its literary creations. If we disregard the qualifications necessary for complete accuracy, we may say that these four generations witnessed a progressive decline of the rationalism which in the seventeenth century had won so many triumphs, and had been most clearly formulated and most persuasively promulgated by René Descartes. They witnessed also, in consequence, a gradual transfer of the authority of mind working on the lines and within the limits of reason to mind working creatively through imagination. The process was complex and many-sided; some phase or aspect of it may be traced in every field of eighteenth-century thought. To pass from the opening to the close of that period is to pass, in political theory, from the atomism of Locke to the organic thinking of Burke; in the scientific interpretation of Nature, from the triumphant mechanism of Newton to the triumphant biology of Lamarck; in poetic criticism, from the fixed standards and absolute rules of Boileau and Pope, to the relativity of Goethe and Carlyle. All these transitions meant the advance from a more abstract and logical to a more complex and concrete apprehension of reality. The Cartesian dogma that the same

uniform undifferentiated reason exists in all men in all ages was undermined by the growing knowledge of the past and the discovery that mind, like man, has a history. The dogma that what reason clearly and distinctly perceives is alone true was similarly discredited by the discovery that even profounder truth may be reached through the irrational 'logic of imagination'. All these transitions meant, again, an approximation to the temper of poetry. Goethe, so futile in physics, was a discoverer in comparative anatomy; while the marvel of the germination and growth of living beings in its turn fortified the disposition to emphasize the spontaneous and 'natural', against the 'artificial', aspects of poetry.

At the close of the first generation (1730) all these forms of the anti-Cartesian reaction were only incipient. But in one department, that which most nearly concerns us here, the theoretic groundwork had already been effectually laid. Muratori and Vico had decisively rebutted the claim of rationalism in poetry, and vindicated the imagination as the master-faculty of the poet.<sup>1</sup> Addison, contributing to a critical movement of which he did not suspect the scope, wrote agreeably of 'Imagination' for the breakfast-tables of Queen Anne's London. But in neither country, nor as yet in Germany, far less in the home of Descartes and Boileau, had there arisen, beside the brilliant or profound exponents of what imagination might be, a great poet who could make manifest what it was.

It was into the midst of these manifold gropings, along many avenues of theory and practice, towards imaginative vision, and the fuller apprehension of reality which it promised, that there broke the apparition of

<sup>1</sup> Vico's claims have long since been established by Croce. But the importance of the other Italian precursors of Romanticism has been first shown, with admirable learning and critical lucidity, by Prof. J. G. Robertson in *The Genesis of Romantic Theory*, 1924.

the most consummate achievement of imagination in the literature of the world. Shakespeare stood there, supreme in the kind of power which Romanticism was fundamentally an effort to recover. Where, as in Germany, the prestige of the classicist drama and its 'rules' was most oppressive because least consonant with the national genius, he was hailed as a liberator. But the release from the despotism of dramatic conventions for which the Shakespearian drama provides a precedent was only the external aspect of his vitalizing power. It was the immensely enriched and deepened experience which he had reflected in drama which demanded a revolution in dramatic technique. His influence was thus never merely negative and anarchic. It was seminal and constructive. It concurred and co-operated with forces already in operation. Again and again he precipitated changes which less potent influences were slowly preparing, turned theoretic persuasion into ardent faith, and threw wide open gates of enchanted regions which faltering hands were knocking at, or timidly setting ajar. The 'rules' were obnoxious not because they hampered the convenience of play-making but because they conflicted with the larger and richer vision of reality which his drama gave. Shakespeare was not learned; but he had the kind of imagination which not merely dreams like truth but anticipates knowledge. Without any 'historic sense', he had left superb presentations of history; without a touch of mysticism he had painted men's demeanour under the sway of supernatural beliefs. And he had created an imaginary humanity which enlarges, deepens, or fore-shadows the humanity of experience.

It was especially in virtue of these three qualities, and along the lines of influence they indicate, that the example of the Shakespearian drama during the critical epoch of European evolution upon the literatures of the Continent in which Shakespeare was a power at all. The

close of that epoch opens a new chapter in that evolution. By 1850, Romanticism, which Shakespeare had everywhere furthered and accelerated, was no longer a living force. But Shakespeare's influence suffered no attenuation. The antagonists of Romance came to him with different demands, applied other tests, and found him, as the Romantics had found, a master of their own lore. The Hegelian Shakespearians of Germany discovered profound and subtle metaphysic in his plays ; the French creators of the realist novel discovered the profound psychology which underlay his soaring imagination.

But at that later chapter we can at this stage only glance. I proceed to sketch the Shakespearian contribution to the evolution of Romanticism, in the three fields described ; and first, through his brilliant and, for the Continent outside Spain, unexampled dramas of national history.

### III

Only a few Elizabethans—a Bacon, a Hooker, a Camden, a Stow—knew something of the temper of history, and Shakespeare, though he wrote some of the greatest of historical plays, was not their disciple. He freely rehandled the matter he used, introduced unhistorical persons, or brought those whom the chronicle provided into unhistorical combinations. He did not ransack his sources to reproduce the ‘atmosphere’ of a distant age, or the local colour of a foreign scene. Nevertheless, the fervour of his patriotic imagination created out of the chronicles of the English fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a semblance of history so splendid, so living, and in its main lines so true, that it everywhere roused the impulse to recover the national past, and became a factor by no means negligible even in the nineteenth-century renascence of historic study.

Historical plays in the Elizabethan sense lay wholly outside all the traditions of French classicism. Even the

arrogant national self-consciousness of the reign of the Grand Monarque had never been flattered by the spectacle of the victories of Vauban or Turenne on the Paris stage. No one had dramatized the French side of Agincourt, or disengaged from calumny and legend the incomparable story of Joan of Arc. But at the moment when Voltaire announced his discovery of the barbarian of genius beyond the Channel, this with many other traditional taboos of the French stage was beginning to relax its hold. The sacrosanct demarcations of dramatic kinds began to be infringed ; and the hybrid species were often employed on unprecedented subjects. In 1731 appeared a 'heroic comedy' on the story of the Chevalier Bayard ; in 1735, a prose tragedy on that of 'Thomas Morus'.<sup>1</sup> The example of Shakespeare powerfully encouraged these faint beginnings, and its contagion sometimes affected technique as well as subject. In 1740 a dagger was used on the stage, and with loud applause, in Gresset's *Édouard III*.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, the Abbé Yart yet more unequivocally invoked Shakespeare's example when he urged French playwrights to turn away from remote and exotic subjects to celebrate their own St. Louis, Francis I, and Richelieu . . . 'not to speak of the illustrious women in whom French history is so rich'.<sup>3</sup> The appeal, like that of the Italian Conti, twenty years before to his own contingency,<sup>4</sup> shows how Shakespeare's example could quicken national sentiment as well as dramatic emulation. But in practical fruit it remained scarcely less barren.

For the first notable effort on the Continent to bring national history on the stage we have to turn from France to her eastern neighbour, whose discovery of Shakespeare had been so much more recent but so much more decisive. Voltaire's patronizing advertise-

<sup>1</sup> Baldensperger, *u.s.*, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Mercure de France*, 1742, quoted by Baldensperger, *u.s.*, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, *u.s.*, p. 105.

ment had been for a quarter of a century before the world when Lessing opened his lips to make the famous assertion that Shakespeare without knowing Aristotle had followed him better than Corneille who did, and that Shakespeare and the Greeks were the true masters of Germany in drama.<sup>1</sup> And the young Goethe told in memorable words his own experience. 'I had not read a page before I felt that he was mine for life; and when I had finished the first play I felt like one born blind whose sight has been magically restored.'<sup>2</sup>

It marks the power which Shakespeare's national Histories could exert on a mind not very sensitive either to history or to nationality, that the drama into which, in 1771, he poured in an impetuous torrent all his new Shakespearian enthusiasm was the History of *Goetz von Berlichingen*. The German class-conflicts of the sixteenth century had not much in common with the English dynastic struggles of the fifteenth. Goethe seems to have felt in the Histories chiefly their freedom from the laws and usages which had hitherto been observed in drama, and he appreciably enlarged the limits which Shakespeare had still observed. The scene hurries from place to place, from province to province, and the time is spread over many years. In Shakespeare, peasants and citizens are from time to time discreetly admitted, but the action is still in the main the affair of statesmen and kings. Goethe opens the gates wide, and the whole population—peasants, townsfolk, soldiers and courtiers, servants, town councillors, knights, gipsies—pour upon the stage. The hero is not a king or prince, but a large-hearted doughty knight, who leads the insurgent peasants against the ill-organized power of the nobles and the Church, and is finally destroyed. When the young Goethe brought his play to Herder, his somewhat older and riper Shakespearian friend, he returned it

<sup>1</sup> *Litteraturbriefe*, 1759.

<sup>2</sup> *Rede am Shakespeare-Tag*, October 1771.

with strong disapproval : 'Shakespeare has utterly spoilt you.' And so Goethe felt ; he had imitated Shakespeare, and become the less Shakespearian thereby. He was too fine a critic not to understand this very well himself, and the revised *Goetz* which we read in the published editions is much less crudely imitative. We are likely to be more struck by the divergences. The play is a dramatized biography of Goetz rather than a tragedy, the story of an adventurous career in a turbulent and stirring society, rather than a drama with a closely welded plot. It is written throughout in prose, like a novel. The steady glow of patriotic ardour which burns in the Histories was at no time in Goethe's way. But he has the fine German sentiment of *Treue* and honesty, and pictures for us Goetz's home, his sterling wife and sister, his loyal comrades Sickingen and Georg, and on the other side the treacherous Adelaide and the impotent Weislingen. And he has the German eye for the currents of spiritual and intellectual life. *Magna Charta* is ignored in *King John*, and the Reformation is only a side issue in a royal intrigue in *Henry VIII*; but Goethe brings before us the coming of the Roman Law in the person of Olearius, and the Reformation in the person of 'Brother Martin' himself. Goethe's figure was just. For the blind man who receives his sight sees with his own eyes, not with the oculist's. And if Shakespeare had 'spoilt' him, as Herder complained, it was somewhat as a young colt bursting with life is spoilt by being turned loose into a rich meadow.

A few years after *Goetz*, Shakespearian reminiscence is still apparent in the noble drama of *Egmont*. The struggle of the united Netherlands with Spain is still in the larger sense national history—the self-assertion of a Germanic against a Latin race. But these antagonisms were not a Goethean theme. Shakespeare is recognizable in the bustling scenes of townsfolk—the citizens of Brussels ; and in particular in one of the

liveliest incidents, where the lawyer Vansen plays the part of Mark Antony in the funeral oration—artfully hinting at a document in his possession which he means them to demand.<sup>x</sup> And Hastings in *Richard III* is recalled by Egmont himself, the brilliant, sanguine, shallow noble, who walks into the trap prepared by his remorseless enemy. But the polished duplicity of Alva belongs to another school of diplomacy than Richard's, and to another school of drama than the young Shakespeare's. Instead of the terrific brevity of that

Tellest thou me of 'ifs'? Thou art a traitor.  
Off with his head!

Alva invites his victim to his palace, engages with him in a long and grave discussion of public policy, until, on receiving the agreed signal that all is ready, he, still without courtesy, demands his sword.

In the meantime the Shakespearian drama had begun at once to fascinate and to repel the sensitive genius of Schiller. He revolted at the coldness which permitted the Englishman to jest in the crisis of tragedy; but Shakespeare's overwhelming power in the handling of tragic character and fate was not to be put by, and has left its impress, as we shall see later, on Schiller's strongest work. Nor was it indifferent for Schiller that Shakespeare, unlike the Greeks, had found his tragic themes in history, and unlike the French and Italians, in recent history, and the history of his own people. Without the Shakespearian example we should hardly have had either *Don Carlos*, *Wallenstein*, or *Tell*. No doubt Schiller saw both history and Shakespeare through the medium of his own high-strung ethical temperament. 'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht'; history was a trial of the nations, and a final judgement awaited them. Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* had represented moments in that world-trial,

<sup>x</sup> II. i.

episodes in the eternal conflict of good and evil. And it was because such a world-trial, and such a final judgement seemed to be hinted in them, that the sequence of the English Histories so deeply interested him, at a time when his Shakespeare worship had long subsided. *Richard III* above all seemed to him, after a re-reading of the entire sequence, 'one of the sublimest tragedies that I know, and I doubt at this moment whether any other of Shakespeare's is its equal. The vast destinies woven in the preceding pieces are here grandly fulfilled. . . . The exclusion from the play of everything tender or sentimental powerfully aids this effect; everything in it is energetic and great, nothing ordinary disturbs the purely aesthetic impression, we experience tragic terror in its unmitigated purity. A lofty Nemesis operates throughout the piece. . . . No other piece of Shakespeare's reminds me so strongly of Greek tragedy.' And he proposes to Goethe that they should prepare the whole eight pieces for performance on the Weimar stage. 'It might be epoch-making.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet Schiller admired the Histories with many reserves. The English hardness which he found so consonant to the purpose of *Richard III* was foreign to his emotional nature, and Shakespeare is nowhere less Schillerian than in that play. Schiller's ideal of liberty was a condition of spiritual even more than of political emancipation, aspired to rather than achieved, and it had no real counterpart in the implicit attachment of the burly Englishmen of the Histories to the freedom they securely possessed. And as to the passion for England herself, which does glow through that great dramatic sequence, neither the *Jungfrau von Orleans* nor *Maria Stuart* suggests that it found in their poet other than a cold response. With what different eyes the two dramatists looked on history we may judge from the persons

<sup>1</sup> *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, No. 386, 28 November 1797.

and scenes they invent when the facts do not answer to their need. Shakespeare needs a voice to speak for England, and imagines Faulconbridge; Schiller needs a champion of oppressed peoples, or a symbol of heroic devotion and integrity, and invents Marquis Posa or Max Piccolomini.<sup>1</sup> But in spite of these divergences the example of the English Histories was of great value for Schiller. When he wrote the sentence just quoted, *Wallenstein* was in active progress. Only a like large canvas, a like crowded stage, with equally unlimited changes of time and place, could have rendered possible the complex movement of his great double drama; while the brilliant painting of the humours of an army in the camp before Agincourt was one of the sources of the more complex, sustained and finely articulated scenes of *Wallenstein's Lager*. For the elemental patriotism of Henry's soldiers there was indeed little room in this picture of a professional soldiery. And Shakespeare's nationalism is the trait which finds least response in the more philosophic and sophisticated art of Schiller.

Schiller, again, was an historian, and the historian has had his hand in making this 'Camp of Wallenstein' not the opening drama of a genuine trilogy, but a preliminary picture of German society in the Thirty Years War. Nevertheless, the Schillerian drama, where Shakespeare's elemental power was in some sense translated into eloquence and ideas, provided a medium through which the German people in the nineteenth century made Shakespeare more completely their own. Lessing, Herder, and Goethe had taken a far larger and more splendid part in founding Shakespeare's German fame; but *Nathan* and *Faust* opened avenues into worlds

<sup>1</sup> Young Piccolomini, who has to choose between friendship and integrity, has a parallel in Brutus. But Brutus stands alone in Shakespeare and certainly does not resemble him; while Max, who is Schiller in disguise, is a haunting type in his work.

utterly remote from his; it was the partially Shakespeareanized drama of Schiller which made him a factor thenceforth in German culture.<sup>1</sup>

## IV

In the capital of Germany's eastern neighbour, meantime, the national accent of Shakespeare's Histories had comparatively early evoked an unskilful but pronounced response. The Empress Catherine II played a conspicuous if not an authoritative part in the introduction of Shakespeare to Russia. A German princess, with a foible for cosmopolitan culture, she invited Diderot to her court, and besides importing English race-horses and Wedgwood ware, devoted much imperial leisure to translating and 'imitating' Shakespeare. After a first experiment with *The Merry Wives* (1783),—undertaken perhaps because another great woman-sovereign had 'commanded' it from the author,—she boldly set out to provide the Russian people with a national History which should, at the same time, after Shakespeare's example, add to the lustre of her dynasty and crown. It was thus that her choice fell upon—no rebel knight, we may be sure, like Goetz, no sublime traitor like Wallenstein,—but the legendary founder of the Russian dynasty. We know from her correspondence that she found Shakespeare's plays 'very convenient' models, having no rule but good sense, so that 'everything is possible in them, and nothing but the tedious and the insipid is wrong'.<sup>2</sup> Catherine, however, able as she was, was not a dramatist, and her *Rurik* did but feebly point the way. Nor was her way followed. The forty years of anglo-mania of which she was an early symptom saw Shake-

<sup>1</sup> He is still visible, for instance, in Wilbrandt's 'antique' *Arria und Messalina* (1874).

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Grimm, 24 September 1786, Lirondelle, *Shakespeare en Russie*, p. 42.

speare admired and imitated in Russia with effusion ; *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet* were adapted, performed, expounded. But to follow Shakespeare creatively, and make original drama of Russian national history, called for another order of powers altogether. It was fortunate for Russia that this task allured her greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin. His *Boris Godunov*, written in the first enthusiasm of a poet's discovery of Shakespeare, but also with the clarity and precision of the pre-romantic age which survived in him, must be placed among the best of the historical plays inspired by Shakespeare. Pushkin found in the story of the usurper Boris a subject rich in Shakespearian opportunities. And he availed himself to the full, in using them, of the freedom of Shakespearian technique, in complete detachment from that of Schiller and Goethe.<sup>1</sup>

Pushkin's powerful initiative did not remain fruitless. The Russian sixteenth century surpassed our Plantagenet age in despotic savagery, as her nineteenth surpassed every other modern epoch in tragic grandeur and pathos. Pushkin's proximate successor, both in his actual subject and in his Shakespearian freedom of intermingled tragedy and comedy, was Alexis Tolstoy, author of the trilogy *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*, *Tsar Fedor Ivanovitch*, and *Tsar Boris*, and of the romance of the same reign, *Prince Serebräni*. But his truest successor was the mightier genius of the same name, who found the limited mould of drama, and consequently of all formal Shakespearian precedent, inadequate to the epic range and compass of *War and Peace*.

<sup>1</sup> The intimate relation to Shakespeare indicated in this sentence could not without disproportion have been sufficiently illustrated in the present sketch. A more detailed study of Pushkin's play is given in the following essay.

## V

While Pushkin in Petersburg was thus building with Shakespeare's help a Russian historical drama, several concurrent forces were making the Shakespearian Histories for the first time the focus of eager interest in France. Whatever applause *Julius Caesar* or *Richard III* had enjoyed in pre-revolutionary Paris they had received in their quality of tragedies rather than as historical drama, and the temper of the Revolution age was still less tolerant of these chronicles of alien kings. But Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* (1802) marked a first step in the recovery of the sentiment of the past, and this vague emotional reaction soon received content and definition from two powerful movements of the first quarter of the new century: the beginnings of the scientific study of history, and the publication of the Waverley Novels. To these non-dramatic influences was added towards the middle of the twenties the stormy revolt of the French Romantics, led by Hugo, against the national tradition in drama, in the name precisely of the free technique of Shakespeare. M. Baldensperger has described the convergence of complex influences upon Shakespeare's Histories during these excited years, in a luminous sentence, as an 'implicit entente which seems to impose this great name and illustrious example simultaneously upon four in reality very divergent tendencies which find in him support for at least the negative part of their programme'.<sup>1</sup>

The historians recognized the value of Shakespeare's drama for the life-like presentation of history. But they had no use, for that purpose, either of the ideality of

<sup>1</sup> *Esquisse*, p. 196. The next paragraph is based upon M. Baldensperger's analysis. The external detail of Shakespeare's vogue in France at this time is collected in Mr. Eric Partridge's *The French Romantics' Knowledge of English Literature* (1924), a learned but not very illuminating survey.

verse, or of the symmetry of a rounded plot. Hence they fell upon the compromise of a sequence of prose scenes. Of such drama, wrote Guizot, the greatest of contemporary historians, 'Shakespeare offered not an absolute model, but the plans on which genius has to work'. It was in this sense, they thought, that one man of genius, Goethe, had shown the way in *Goetz*. But it was with far severer historicity than either Goethe or Shakespeare, that, among others, Vitet carried out this programme in his powerful 'trilogy' (1827-9) founded on the sombre crisis of the sixteenth-century civil wars—the *Barricades*, the *États de Blois*, and the *Mort de Henri III*.

Closely allied were the experiments of men who were drawn to history by psychological rather than pragmatic interest, and who later, like Stendhal and Mérimée, found their ideal form in historical romance. Mérimée's *Jacquerie* (1828) brings home to us both the importance of the Shakespearian suggestions, and the enormous advance achieved since his day in the apprehension of history. No French dramatist had painted the French side of the Hundred Years War. The vigorous nationalism of *Henry V* and *Henry VI* might have provoked retort. But the Shakespearian seed is here working in a mind of very unlike temper—not genial or expansive, but cool, ironic, disciplined, democratic and erudite. Mérimée, who now shows us France as she was during that terrible century, writes only as a learned and brilliant historian of social conditions. His subject, the savage conflict of the French serfs with their feudal lords, had counterparts in the England of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but no nearer counterpart in Shakespeare's art than the humorous caricature of the rebellion of Cade. Shakespeare had exploited the arrogant vanity of the French soldiers in a like temper of patriotic badinage. Mérimée shows us, with a more veracious realism than Shakespeare

himself, the English soldier who swaggered through the occupied France of that day—a stout fellow of his hands, a great eater and drinker, hardy and independent, scorning, as became a son of well-governed England, the feudal humiliations under which the French peasant groaned, and often intervening with rough good-nature in his behalf. In all this the historian entirely effaces the lover of Shakespeare and the student of his art; but it was nevertheless Shakespeare's dramatic presentation of history which led the historian to throw his picture into dramatic form at all.

A very different type of 'historic' enthusiasm possessed the brilliant band of poets who formed the newly-founded Romantic School led by Victor Hugo. How closely, if not 'history', at least a fantastic pageant simulating the past, entered into their notion of romantic poetry, we may judge from Hugo's notorious *Cromwell* (1826), and the famous manifesto which he issued as its Preface. Extravagant, even outrageous, travesty, both of the man and of his age, as this unactable drama inevitably appears, Hugo was not consciously weaving a fairy-tale.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary he meant to be a historian. He studied chronicles and memoirs; his character of Cromwell is Cromwell as he saw him in the light of these authorities. 'This is the man, this the epoch', he tells us, 'which I have tried to sketch in this book.'<sup>2</sup> And if its six thousand lines convey an action which lasts only a few hours and never moves out of London, this concentration is a result of fidelity not to the classical unities but to the recorded facts; carried out 'not by Aristotle's leave but with the leave of history'.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, however, that whatever 'history' may have permitted or forbidden to the author of *Cromwell*, this was not a serious attempt to create an acting historical drama on Shakespearian or any other lines. And when Hugo a few years later delivered his first real challenge to

<sup>1</sup> *Pref.*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

French classical orthodoxy with *Hernani* (1830), he owed to Shakespeare little more than the warrant for a swiftly moving scene, an action crowded with incident and with persons, and the free modulation of the alexandrine in which he sought the counterpart of Shakespeare's free intermingling of verse and prose. We are at the court of Isabella of Spain; and the legendary romance of Spanish history, the glory of the Cid in chivalry and love, has effaced the tussles of our Plantagenets for crown and kingdom from Hugo's romantic brain. The love of Hernani and Dona Sol fills the centre of the piece with its lyrical splendour, and this bandit hero and lover, like Hugo's other heroes—Ruy Blas, Gennaro, Rodolfo—is inspired by Byron, not by Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

Shakespeare, if we judge him rightly, was not a Romantic in any sense, and there was as little of the mystic in him as of the historian. Like Homer, he was as much at home in the 'prose' as in the 'poetry' of life, and made as good poetry of it. He did not walk the world transported with the sense of invisible presences, or forget the actual in visions of an ideal future, any more than he put aside the preconceptions of his own age in the endeavour to apprehend the past. But here too, by the insight and psychological veracity with which he rendered humanity as he saw it, in all its living 'habit' of custom and belief, his legend and folklore, ghosts, witches, and fairies, and the airy shapes which syllable men's names, acquired an appeal to the imagination which cynicism and 'good sense' could not permanently resist, and which contributed to undermine their authority by fostering the 'renascence of wonder', as his brilliant 'Elizabethan' versions of the past had quickened the imaginative presentations of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lanson, *Hist. de la Litt. française*, p. 964.

history. Many a line and phrase, ejaculated as it were casually in the great moments of his drama, had a quality which makes the senses seem less credible and the solid earth less final and less secure. Macbeth's 'there is nothing serious in mortality', Prospero's 'we are such stuff as dreams are made on', momentarily invest the visible scene in a spectral light charged with the mystery of life and death.

The supernaturalism of the great tragedies and that of the fairy dramas belong to different spheres of art, and they had different fortunes in the history of Shakespeare's fame. So long as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* retained their overwhelming tragic appeal, ghosts and witches were secure from aesthetic scorn. But Oberon and Ariel held their ground by a more precarious tenure. Voltaire, far from cavilling at the introduction of a ghost on the stage, saw in it a means of enriching the scanty French inventory of the sources of tragic terror, and borrowed it for his own *Sémiramide*. The Voltairian ghost, it is true, failed to terrify; but Parisian salons a few years later could be thrilled by the spectacle of Garrick as Macbeth clutching at the airy dagger that beckons him to the chamber of Duncan.<sup>1</sup> *The Tempest* and the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* were not fortified by this overpowering human and tragic interest; and the latter was dismissed with indignation by Mr. Pepys. Dryden and Addison might extol 'the fairy way of writing',<sup>2</sup> but the phrase piquantly betrays that such literature was now simply an elegant accomplishment, like the composition of Latin verse—a delightful diversion, *mentis gratissimus error*, such as the most rational mind may permit itself to enjoy. It was not by Addison's agreeable discourses, nor yet by the benignant indulgence of Johnson, that the nature and power of 'the fairy way of writing' as Shakespeare practised it could be divined or disclosed. With the English

<sup>1</sup> Baldensperger, *u.s.*, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Spect.*, No. 419.

pioneers of Romanticism, the Wartons, Hurd, and Collins, who long before Johnson's *Preface* had shown another way of regarding superstitions, or with Young, whose churchyard melancholy spread over cultivated Europe a sentiment highly favourable to marvel, we are not here concerned. Vico, the initiator of the whole movement, knew nothing of Shakespeare. Bodmer, who with Breitinger was the first to proclaim in German that the wonderful is the essence of poetry (1742), had scarcely heard, and could not spell, his name. The distinction of having led the way on the Continent in seeing the marvel-world of Shakespeare with imaginative eyes belongs to Johann Gottfried Herder.

Herder's rich synthetic genius had drawn decisive suggestions from Hurd and probably from Vico. But he was the first to apply on a world-wide scale, with the insight and eloquence of a poet, the belief formulated by Vico a generation before, that poetry is the birth of naïve conditions and of the childlike phases of human history. In that primitive phase of history myth was as natural as song. Folk-lore and folk-song went together, and it was not hard to discover in these native springs of marvel, still in Herder's day less overlaid by civilization in Germany than elsewhere in the West, an appanage peculiarly abundant in the Germanic race, and peculiarly congenial to its temper.

It is easy to understand how Shakespeare appeared to Herder, when seen through the glamour of these ideas, if it was not rather the apparition of Shakespeare which illuminated all the other avenues of his thought. It would not be just to say that Herder saw in Shakespeare only that which transcends ordinary life; yet it is chiefly this which ravishes and intoxicates him. Lessing had exposed with trenchant ridicule Voltaire's attempt at a ghost in *Sémiramide*, but he was chiefly concerned to show how grossly Voltaire had violated the imaginative verisimilitude which must be observed if

a stage-ghost is to be dramatically right.<sup>1</sup> For Herder the ghosts and witches and fairies of Shakespeare were magical glimpses of primitive poetry. This is how he seeks to bring home the tragic quality of *Macbeth* to an imaginary novice not yet responsive to its spell :

'When Shakespeare was revolving that terrific royal murder in his soul, were you, reader, too dull to go along with him in every successive scene? Then alas for Shakespeare, alas for the faded pages in your hands! Then you have felt nothing in the opening scene with the witches, in thunder and lightning, nothing in the "bloody man", and the King's greeting to him, and the working of this greeting and the witches in his head! Nothing at seeing his wife with the fatal letter pacing that castle chamber where later she will walk so horribly transformed! Nothing in the gentle king, and the mild evening air about the house where the swallow nests secure, but thou, O king, wilt find thy murderer . . . !'<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to understand that the tragedies of northern legend, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, appealed more powerfully to Herder's temperament than *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, tragedies of the south and of the modern world.

Herder was one of the heralds of the German Romantic School of the next generation, as Lessing was its antithesis or, in their own naïve phrase, its Antichrist. And for the completed reaction of the German mind to Shakespearian Romance and the most unqualified exaltation of the wonderful in Shakespeare, we must turn to the group of critics and poets who in 1800 founded

<sup>1</sup> Lessing puts the matter with admirable force and point: 'Not to believe in ghosts is no reason for not employing them in drama. The germ of belief in them is implicit in us all, particularly in those for whom the dramatist writes. Everything depends on the poet's power to quicken these germs. If he has it, we may believe in ordinary life as we please; in the theatre we believe what he chooses. Such a poet is Shakespeare and he almost alone.' *Hamb. Dram.*, St. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakespeare*. In 'Von deutscher Art und Kunst', Hamburg, 1773.

that movement.<sup>1</sup> For with the Schlegels and Tieck the revolt against rationalism, of which we have traced some phases, assumed an acute and extravagant, yet strangely fruitful form. Bodmer, building upon *Paradise Lost*, which for Milton was rational if not real, had required the poet to give the wonderful at least the air of probability : the later Romantics rejected such compromises. They not only opened the door to all that reason cannot apprehend, but barred it upon reason. Logical connexion, ordered purpose, natural and social law, belonged at best to the prose of life ; genius and poetry first found themselves when they escaped into the studio—to the freedom of an art emancipated from nature and not even ideally ‘imitating’ it ; emancipated no less from society, and its bourgeois satisfactions and interests ; an art inspired by all that flouts rationality—caprice, fancy, play, mystery, ‘irony’. Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* was the first of novels because its hero (unlike Tom Jones) reached a goal at the close utterly unlike the object of his pursuit at the beginning, and that (no less otherwise than Tom) by way of art.

A more recondite development of all this was seen in the Romantic philosophy of Schelling, for whom genius, thus rebellious to prosaic actuality, was an effluence of the ‘world-soul’. The ‘incalculableness’ of supreme art was found also in the universe. The most original mind among these propounders of paradox was the brilliant and daring Friedrich Schlegel. But his brother August and Ludwig Tieck took an even more important part in working out the consequences of these ideas in criticism and literature. Their application to Shakespeare was principally the work of these two.

But few paradoxes are so wild that a case for them cannot be made good in the universe of Shakespeare. And the Romantic paradoxes concealed not a little of

<sup>1</sup> On this section Gundolf, u.s., ‘Romantics’, has valuable, if overcharged, ideas.

original and illuminating perception. These irrationalists seized, in the first place, and vindicated the element of real irrationality in Shakespeare's art; the playful defiance of probability, the transparent but never penetrated disguises, the 'accidents' which turn the balance between life and death. The worship of caprice and 'irony' doubtless led to some eccentric results; as when the whimsical construction of *Love's Labour's Lost* and the fairy-tale plot of *Pericles* were held to place these plays near the summit of Shakespeare's achievement. But this Romantic paradox wholesomely checked the disposition to discover throughout Shakespeare profound purpose or moral law.

More important was the discovery that Shakespeare's *language* is also in the main less an instrument of logical expression than of magical suggestion, achieving its unmatched power not by combinations of definite terms in defined meanings, but by incalculable felicities of collocation. And for this Shakespearian language of suggestion and collocation August Schlegel had the genius to discover a wonderfully close counterpart in his own tongue. From the resources of a speech heavily overlaid by the abstractions of erudition and scholasticism he elicited the rich lore of native idiom. Schlegel was in no way comparable with Goethe or Schiller as an original poet. But he found for Shakespeare a German speech more Shakespearian, and even more intimately poetic, than lay within the compass of either. Most German poetry other than folk-song had been composed by minds too instinct with culture to achieve the fine unreason of poetic phrase. Goethe himself, the most childlike, was the wisest of children, and knew, as Arnold said, why every stroke was there. His verse-tragedies apart from *Faust* are written with Sophocles not Shakespeare in mind; while the dramatic speech of Lessing is that of a brilliant logician, and the dramatic speech of Schiller that of an eloquent pleader. But

Shakespeare, as Tennyson profoundly said, taught us to tolerate incoherence. In most things we English did not and do not need the lesson. But to the methodical German the fine unreason of poetic speech embodied in the great translation was a discovery destined to bear fruit.

Finally, the Romantic paradox threw a new light, which by no means led entirely astray, upon Shakespeare's *faerie*. Shakespeare was the supreme poet because the mysterious unreason of things which permeates life is so transparently mirrored in his art. The delight we feel in his portrayal of the mysterious things in nature is therefore something very different from Addison's 'delight in illusion'. To the Schlegel brothers and Tieck, the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* and the *Tempest* were not mere beautiful by-ways in the Kingdom of Shakespeare, they were the door which gave access to its inmost shrine. This Shakespeare was the real Shakespeare, and Prospero's 'we are such stuff as dreams are made on', and Theseus's lines on imagination that bodies forth the forms of things unknown, were the key to his mind and to the meaning of his poetry.

To the cooler scrutiny of later scholarship this was sheer misunderstanding of Shakespeare, as well as, incidentally, of Theseus's speech. Nevertheless, as historians of Romanticism have pointed out, Tieck's misunderstanding was of immense value. His illusory discoveries in Shakespeare led the way in other fields to discoveries not illusory.<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare's fairy world made these German poets and critics aware of their own. In the German countryside around them still survived countless traces of a fairy world far richer than that at which Shakespeare had casually glanced; and folk custom and folk-tale were still the articulate witnesses to a cosmic life in which elves and gnomes, goblins, and

<sup>1</sup> This aspect of Tieck's work has been admirably appreciated by Gundolf, *u.s.*

dwarfs, wishing-rods, and magical sayings, provided the ever-present background and the recurring crises and catastrophes. Tieck himself possessed this *Urge-fühl*, the sense for the primitive, in a high degree; it was the source of almost all that was beautiful in his own prodigally abundant but evanescent poetry. And it became the source of something that was not evanescent, when the study of the folk-lore of Germany took organic shape in the great *Deutsche Mythologie* of Jakob Grimm. Shakespeare's sport with the Elizabethan fairy world, perhaps for the entertainment of the guests at an Elizabethan court-wedding, thus guided the Romantic explorers in their first imperfect yet momentous steps towards that comprehension of the mentality of primitive man upon which modern anthropology is based. It is in the workshop of German science, not in the gallery of his faded legendary tales and dramas, that the real and lasting achievement of Tieck is to be found. But the German Romantics, so fertile and often profound in criticism, so rich in the penetrating intuitions presently to be elaborated in science, were ineffectual in their original dramatic poetry. Nor, within the sphere of literature, was it by imitating Shakespeare, but by giving free play to her inborn and incomparable gift of song, that Germany in the person of Romantics like Uhland and Eichendorff reached noble heights of poetry. It is only now and then in later days, under the realist régime of the nineties, that the myth world of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* could still be remembered in the beautiful *Versunkene Glocke* of Gerhard Hauptmann.

And the romantic teaching reacted for better and worse upon the study and comprehension of Shakespeare himself. It mattered little that Tieck took the *Dream* and the *Tempest* to be the key to his genius. It mattered little even that Friedrich Schlegel, on the lines of Schelling, ascribed to Shakespeare a 'cosmic thinking power' allied to and fulfilling the mind of God. This

cosmic Shakespeare was far enough from Lessing's cool self-conscious artist, whose greatness lay in his right use of his artistic resources, and who 'imitated Nature so successfully because he understood Art so well'.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it was, in substance, not less true.

## VII

In France, on the other hand, it was precisely this aspect of Shakespeare, so fruitful in the Romanticism of Germany, that found least response. The intimate penetration of French Romanticism with historic science, which has been described, was unfavourable to the mystic temper; and the *Urgefühl* which had made German Romanticism the parent of scientific mythology and folk-lore was conspicuously wanting among the Romantics of France and rare among her historians.

Even the sportive, 'ironic' temper which the German Romantics recognized in Shakespeare's comedies and laboriously emulated in some of their own, found only late and rare recognition among the French. Hugo's pretensions as a 'historian' did not save him from monstrous distortions of history; but they were too serious to allow him to sport, like Shakespeare, with place and time. Equally far was his gross and rather vulgar humour from the semblance of Shakespeare's delicate fancy. It was at most on the side of 'the grotesque' that their spheres of humour approached. One only of his fellow poets had the genius to create comedies akin to Shakespeare's in this humorous detachment from any actual or historic *milieu*, and comparable with his in psychological truth. The *Comédies* and *Proverbes* of Alfred de Musset do not cross the borders of the fairy world, but scenery and circumstance have the capricious vagueness, and the action the sudden turns and swift surprises of the fairy-tale. But whatever they

<sup>1</sup> Gundolf, *u.s.*

owed to Shakespearian suggestion they are truly and exquisitely French. Shakespeare, 'his great friend', has not so much taught Musset as opened the door into a region of gracious fancy, unknown to his countrymen before, where he discovered for himself. Heine declared that the French, who understood Shakespeare's tragedy with difficulty, entirely failed to comprehend the enchanted world of Shakespearian comedy. 'Musset', declares M. Baldensperger, 'refutes that sceptical prognostic'; to him chiefly is due the rehabilitation of this enchanted garden in France, hitherto responsive only to the tragic and the 'grotesque' in Shakespeare; so that there exists a whole work of French poetry and fancy bathed in the woodland freshness of *As You Like It* and the moonlight of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*.<sup>1</sup> This is just, with one reserve. The fairy-tale is without fairies. The most enchanted corner of the enchanted garden remained unexplored. To the poetry of myth and marvel the French imagination of the Romantic age was certainly not inaccessible. But the generating stimulus came from Goethe's *Faust*<sup>2</sup> or from Hoffmann's Tales, not from Shakespeare.

But where Shakespeare did not prevail as poetry he succeeded as melodrama. From the beginning of the century the untrained populace of the boulevards had been regaled with abundance of Shakespearian fare, and here the marvels were the most savoursome ingredient of the dish. Thus the 'walking forest' of *Macbeth* figured in one melodrama, the ghost of *Hamlet* in another.

If we seek, in French poetry, a more direct emanation from this enchanted corner of Shakespeare, we have to pass out of France, and out of the Romantic

<sup>1</sup> Baldensperger, *u.s.*, p. 203. George Sand later adapted *As You Like It* for French actors.

<sup>2</sup> On the influence of *Faust* in and beyond Romantic France, cf. M. Baldensperger's valuable monograph, *Gœthe en France*.

generation, to the Flanders of our own day. Maeterlinck's drama, in its earliest phase, resembles a dream of a Shakespearian dream, of such a dream as oppressed Macbeth's fevered imagination after the crime. The stir and passion of drama are subdued to a shadowy semblance; tumult and debate to mysterious intimations or pregnant silence; tragic events occur, but the persons engaged in them are childlike, scarcely corporeal, maidens and brooding old men. Here the unearthly effect is won not so much by the dreamy outlines of the landscape as by the elimination of all that is pronounced and emphatic in character.

More recently, in France itself, thanks in part to the influence of Maeterlinck, the supple and sensitive genius of French criticism has shown itself peculiarly accessible to the aspect of Shakespeare which it once branded as the barbarian's 'sottise'. For M. André Chevrillon—coming round from another angle, and quite unconsciously, to the view of the German Romantics—the visionary, the 'Celtic', poet is predominant though not exclusive in Shakespeare. Over the Shakespearian drama he sees 'the spectral light that Carlyle saw flooding history'. His 'world is woven of the same stuff as our dreams', and Shakespeare himself is but the supreme example of the visionary imagination in which the English and the Russian people stand alone.<sup>1</sup>

Whether Shakespeare himself saw the world with the eyes of a visionary we need not here inquire. What is certain, and for our purpose alone important, is that he had a profound acquaintance with the visionary imagination in others, and portrayed it with convincing power. It is the psychological mastery of Shakespeare, as shown in his creation of character, that has commonly been held to be his greatest gift. To its reactions in continental criticism and poetry we have now, finally, to turn.

<sup>1</sup> Chevrillon, A., *Trois Études* (Kipling, Galsworthy, Shakespeare).

## VIII

The distinguished critic just quoted has pointed to the paradox that the people 'which most worship health' should also have 'painted more powerfully and persistently than any other those disorders in which the internal forces of man lose their balance and are seen in all their tragic grandeur'. It is in the great tragedies that his mastery of the heights and depths of character is most extraordinary.

Shakespeare's power as a creator of character had however to wait long for express recognition. His own countrymen bore implicit witness to it when they crowded the gallery of the Globe to see 'Beatrice' or 'Malvolio', and when the History of Henry IV was commonly known as the comedy of Falstaff. But when Shakespeare was 'discovered' in the following century, this side of his achievement was not conspicuously a mark for either admiration or abuse. His 'genius' was seen in 'situations', and in telling devices of stage-craft, like the ghost; his 'barbarism' in bits of impertinent action like the grave-digging episode, and Desdemona's return to life.<sup>1</sup> But Macbeth and Othello themselves did not obviously portend revolution, and might have been accommodated without any breaking strain to the technique of Corneille.

Nevertheless, the Shakespearian character was a genuine growth of the Elizabethan soil, as richly steeped in Elizabethan mentality as any of those grotesque extravagances ridiculed by his French discoverer. His imagined persons bore less trace than any others in great literature of the formalism of the schools. Their flowing yet firm profiles did not conform to the rigid

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire, *Lettres sur les Anglais*, xviii. It is to be noted that Voltaire's point is not that Desdemona in her last words does not speak as a wife just strangled with insufficient reason by her husband might be expected to speak, but that under these conditions she is made to speak at all.

outlines of accepted categories of human nature, nor their subtle complexity, their impulsive vagaries, their capacity for growth and for degeneration, their inconsistencies and self-contradictions, to the 'decorum' postulated by classical theory. And they were destined, no less than his nationalist history, or his fairy, to sap the authority of Cartesian rationalism in art. But it was reserved for Romantic criticism to appreciate the originality and profundity of Shakespeare's character-creation, and nowhere was the imaginative insight of Coleridge, Lamb, or Schlegel, more brilliantly applied.

The distinctive superiority of Shakespeare's characters, as they represent it, and the ground of their superiority to those of the classicist and even of the antique drama, lies mainly in two points. Shakespeare creates 'individuals', not 'types'; his great tragic heroes, in particular, do not represent a class; they have generic traits, but these connect them with different genera; Macbeth, the murderer tormented by imagination, Othello, 'noteasilyjealous, but, being wrought, perplexed in the extreme', stand, like most of Browning's people, if without his wilful paradox, 'on the dangerous edge of things'.

And while they thus resist exhaustive classification within rational categories, they move and act, and take vital decisions, under the sway of inner forces with whose operation reason has very little to do. In Shakespeare's psychology, conscious or not, men do not act on the ground of reason but use reason to defend the action to which passion has impelled them. His monologues of debate are not, like Corneille's, extended syllogisms advancing from premisses to a conclusion. Most often, like Brutus, his deliberators have already framed their resolution—even announce it in their opening words ('It must be by his death')—and the ostensible inward debate that ensues is merely the process of discovering reasons for their course. And this trait, in

which Shakespeare's insight is entirely confirmed by modern psychological science, is closely linked with the unprecedented import which attaches to *character* in his drama. Character is there the ultimate ground, as Fate was with the Greeks. His persons do not act in a particular way because they have stronger motives for acting so than otherwise, but because, as Hegel said, they are, once for all, what they are.<sup>1</sup> It is this which distinguishes Hamlet from his supposed antique counterpart Orestes. Orestes struggles in a genuine dilemma, a conflict of duties, each imperious, each divinely imposed ; Hamlet's is the more desperate case of one who sees all the motives for acting on the one side ('How all occasions do inform against me'), and his own inertia on the other, and falls between his nature and his will.

The quality of Shakespeare's characterization was only by degrees fully recognized. Here and there, some figure of fresh English girlhood, of a kind unknown to the French stage, 'less reflective and moral than the Junies and Aricies, less energetic than the Hermiones and Roxanes', may have attracted Voltaire's emulation;<sup>2</sup> but the psychical opulence of Shakespeare's more complex creations would have emerged denuded to abstraction from the crucible of that hard and brilliant brain, even if it had not been deliberately simplified by the doctrinaire critic. 'How bald is the jealous Orosmane beside the jealous Othello !' exclaims Lessing, reviewing Voltaire's *Zaire* ;<sup>3</sup> and Lessing had little of the Germanic delight in complexity ; much as he disdained Voltaire's 'bald' Othello, he would probably have preferred to the richness of Shakespeare's an Othello drawn with the noble simplicity of Sophocles. The reaction of the Germanic temperament to the over-

<sup>1</sup> *Aesthetik*, iii. 567.

<sup>2</sup> As M. Baldensperger (*u.s.*, p. 165) and M. Lanson (*Voltaire*, p. 102), quoted there, concur in believing.

<sup>3</sup> *Ham. Drun.*, St. 15.

whelming experience which Shakespeare's representation of tragic conflict, agony, and ruin brought in that generation to sensitive, mature, and unprepared minds, is better seen in the glowing and impassioned rhapsody of Herder already quoted. To him the complexity of Shakespeare and the 'simplicity' of Sophocles were equally justified, because, for the Germanic peoples, and for the Greeks, equally grounded in history and 'nature'. The wild spirits of the *Sturm und Drang* were incapable of this historic relativity. They saw in Shakespeare crude projections of themselves, and impetuously made him their own. Their watchwords were freedom and genius, and they thought they found in his criminals of Titanic ruthlessness and Titanic powers, consummate examples of what freedom and genius meant. Even the young Schiller of *Die Räuber* read into Shakespeare his own anarchic and tempestuous idealism, and imagined that his Franz Moor was an Edmund because he committed adultery and parricide.

But Schiller's drama, with all its crudity, is, as Cole-ridge felt, sublime. Through its grossness and extravagance there burns the passion of personality which in loftier and richer forms was to permeate with its fertilizing inspiration the poetry and the speculation of the great age. That Germanic prepossession of the supreme worth of the individual self, which found expression in Luther's assertion of private judgement, in Leibniz's universe of autonomous monads, in Kant's ethical principle that the Person must always be treated as an end, never as a means, in Fichte's interpretation of the world as a manifestation of the Ego, in Goethe's great epic drama of a soul's development, and in his romance of 'Apprenticeship' in the building of a life —this profound, ingrained faith in personality underlay the crude extravagances of the *Sturm und Drang*; and for larger, more critical German eyes than theirs, it invested with a peculiar fascination the inborn strength

and spontaneous autonomy of Shakespeare's characters. Both Schiller and Goethe came in later days to find more complete satisfaction in the Attic than in the Shakespearian stage. But Shakespeare's characters maintained their hold upon them when they had become severe censors of the rest of his technique. The plot of *Hamlet* might be encumbered, as in the eyes of both poets it was, by its background of irrelevant incident in Norway, Poland, and England; but the personality of Hamlet himself exercised a lasting spell. And here the Attic drama itself helped them, as it had helped Lessing, to a deeper insight into Shakespeare. They saw that, though he knew nothing of the external fate which determines the tragic destinies of the Atridae or of Oedipus, he had represented with a power and psychological mastery beyond parallel the nexus between character and tragic doom; so that character itself seemed to acquire the status of fate, a fate operating not without but within. And at a date still further removed from the unqualified Shakespeare worship of his early prime, when he was about to bring *Romeo and Juliet* on the Weimar stage relieved of those farcical intruders—'intolerable to our sense of continuity'—Mercutio and the Nurse,<sup>1</sup> he could extol Shakespeare's handling of the tragic dilemma in *Hamlet* and the rest as an extraordinary and unexampled union of the antique and the modern.<sup>2</sup> So stubbornly did the richness and intensity of Shakespeare's painting of character retain its hold upon his critical intellect when he was least accessible to the largely ordered composition of the Shakespearian plot.

Neither of the Weimar poets, moreover, escaped this influence in their original creations. They rarely, after their novitiate, imitated him, even in the original fashion of genius; they rather struggled to resist his spell. *Caesar* and *Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* were there, and no one who had once been intoxicated by their

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare und Kein Ende*, 1813-26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

power could then, without a powerful effort of will, write tragic drama as if they did not exist. But precisely at this point of strongest attraction the psychological and ethical divergence was most sensible. To both poets the outlook upon life which seems to underlie the tragedy of Shakespeare was uncongenial, if not repellent. Neither of them faces its calamities, its ironic sport with human happiness, so unflinchingly or with hopes so hardly maintained, as he. We are nowhere confronted, in *Faust* or in *Wallenstein*, with that 'world travailing for perfection but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste', which Shakespeare, in Bradley's penetrating words, has shown us in *Othello* and *Lear*.<sup>1</sup>

Schiller, with his soaring gaze fixed upon the ideal, could not have felt thus poignantly the calamities of tragedy, even had his imagination been of Shakespearian compass and intensity. His hero's ruin is not 'self-waste' or even 'self-torture'; it is seen in the transfiguring light of the moral sublimity for which it affords the occasion. The *Jungfrau von Orleans* and *Maria Stuart*, whose heroines are thus 'liberated by their doom', are drawn with an animus which seems un-Shakespearian as well as anti-English. But in the grand 'quasi-trilogy' of *Wallenstein*, his greatest achievement, he is nearer to Shakespeare; in part simply because he keeps the 'Schiller' in him more severely in check. We have already noticed the bearing of the camp scenes of *Henry V* upon those of *Wallenstein's Lager*. But the personality of Wallenstein is made, as signally as that of Macbeth or Hamlet, the conditioning cause out of which the whole action grows. He does not fall because he has rebelled against the emperor, or intrigued with the Swedes. He acts and plots in an atmosphere of illusion generated by his own superb and boundless self-will. He is the most

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespearian Tragedy*, p. 39.

remarkable example in modern drama since Shakespeare of a great man entangled in his own personality, and brought low not by his enemies' plots but by the whole complex of mingled grandeur, ambition, and self-deception, in himself. While the tragedy was still on the stocks, Schiller felt concern lest he was allowing to the outer forces, the machinations of Wallenstein's enemies, too large a part in bringing about his fate; lest, in other words, he had been untrue to the great Shakespearian way of conceiving tragedy as a doom rooted in the soul of the hero. 'But I took comfort', he writes to Goethe, 'from the case of Macbeth, where metaphysical fate is likewise far less to blame for the man's ruin than the man himself.'<sup>1</sup> Wallenstein is no counterpart of Macbeth, but he would not have been the great and moving figure he is without the example of Shakespeare's tragedies. Here there is no question of actual supernatural powers. Schiller, with all his reverence both for Shakespeare and the Greeks, was too modern to represent fate and metaphysical aid as actually intervening to precipitate his hero's fall even by merely mocking him with delusive hopes. But he saw that Shakespeare too, though his witches were real, made Macbeth's own impatient ambition the real source of his ruin; and he has made Wallenstein too his own Nemesis. His faith in the guidance of the stars is only one aspect of the illusion which blinds him to the treachery of bosom friends, and makes him imagine that he is the maker of circumstance and the disposer of events when he is by that very belief being drawn the more surely into their toils. It was only in the beautiful creation of Max Piccolomini that Schiller allowed himself to gratify his own idealism.

If Schiller saw tragic suffering in the glamour of the heroic endurance it evoked or the spiritual purification

<sup>1</sup> *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, No. 249, 28 November 1796.

in which it issued, to Goethe it was only tolerable at all as the passing condition of a final reconciliation or redemption, a discord justified by the harmony it prepared. Faust had to be saved, and Mephistophiles to lose his wager; and when in *Iphigenie* he borrowed the motive and form of a Greek tragedy, it was significantly from that less usual type in which the sufferings are only transient and do not involve death at all. And it was to the least harrowing among the great tragedies of Shakespeare, the one where the hero's death most resembles a triumph, and where spiritual substance most outweighs outward event, that Goethe was most powerfully and continuously drawn. Hamlet plays in his creative art a yet larger part than Macbeth in Schiller's. In *Hamlet* he found, precisely, a drama in which all the outer happenings are subordinate and subject to one intense personality which pervades and saturates the whole. This personality, too, as he interpreted it, was singularly congenial to his own; and the sensitive idealist in Hamlet communicated something of its quality to Werther, Tasso, Meister, and Faust, where the English temper, and whatever is English in Shakespeare, are most conspicuously remote. In *Werther's Sorrows* as in *Hamlet*, the tragedy has its roots in man's nature, not in the outer situation, and the changing pageant of his thought and passion absorbs us even more exclusively. Werther is more akin to Rousseau's Saint-Preux than to Shakespeare's Hamlet. He is far from being equally unlike the Hamlet Goethe imagined to be Shakespeare's. There are few outward traces of Shakespeare in Werther, it is true. It is not Shakespeare, but Homer or Ossian who feeds or allays Werther's passionate dreams; it is not Hamlet's circumstances and fate, but Goethe's own, or Jerusalem's, that Werther reflects. Nevertheless, we are justified in saying, with Gundolf,<sup>1</sup> that as *Hamlet* is the first, so

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare und der deutsche Gedanke: Goethe.*

*Werther* is the first German example of the tragedy derived not from frustrating fate but from simply being oneself. It is therefore in substance a series of pictures of Werther's soul in its changing moods ; the events are wholly subordinate to this. His 'Letters' do not, like those in *Clarissa* and the *New Héloïse*, convey a story as seen from several angles ; they are outpourings of individual passion and thought from which the story may be gathered, as we gather Hamlet's from his first impassioned monologue (I. 2). The unique intensity of those monologues had seldom, in modern prose, been so vividly recalled. *Faust* is a creation enormously more complex than *Werther*. But the soaring genius of the Renaissance in *Hamlet* is more vividly suggested in Goethe's *Faust* than in Marlowe's ; while his beautiful, pure and noble nature, as Goethe conceived it, 'without the sensuous strength that makes the hero', foreshadows Tasso, the frail and delicate poet, incapable of coping with the world. Wilhelm Meister, into whose mouth Goethe put his own memorable interpretation of *Hamlet*, is himself a kind of Hamlet who, through the jostling of experience, overcomes the disability to which Hamlet succumbs, mastering himself and mastering thereby the art of life. That in his case the 'precious jar' was not shattered by the young oak,<sup>1</sup> that he was not ruined by failure but won his way through it to moral health, marks the final divergence between Shakespeare, the poet of consummate but ruthless tragedy, and Goethe, who admits tragedy only as a step to reconciliation and deliverance ; a divergence, ultimately, between two views, alike rooted in the heart and intellect of man, and both perhaps necessary for complete wisdom, the unflinching recognition of the reality of evil, and the faith that in and for the spirit of man it will somehow be overcome.

Goethe was not only the first to offer an interpretation of the *Hamlet* problem, he was the first to recognize

<sup>1</sup> *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, iv., ch. 13.

that the play presents a problem at all. His solution could scarcely satisfy; but it was immensely stimulating, and it gave the cue to the century of *Hamlet*-interpretation in which Germany was beyond rivalry to lead the way, and which was to leave so many monuments of the brilliance, tenacity, and daring of German thought. 'Hamlet is Germany,' Freiligrath was to cry long after Goethe's death; for the German Hamlet had indeed acquired an impress of contrasted strength and weakness which, to a German of the pre-Bismarckian era, acutely alive to the intellectual and to the political history of his people, might well seem tragically symbolic. A contrast somewhat like this was, if we may trust Hamlet's own bitter self-analysis (IV. 4), one-fourth of the truth. But that quarter-truth was so frequently expressed, and so plausibly borne out by the plot, that it might well be taken for Shakespeare's authoritative recognition of that antithesis of outer and inner, of the world of action and the world of thought, which is so acutely, often so tragically, interwoven with the history of the German people. For the political history of Germany is not a record of the progressive consolidation of a polity, like that of France or England, but of a series of magnificent successes followed by chaotic failures. The empire of Charles the Great, the empire of Frederick II and Charles V, the empire of Bismarck, were dazzling moments, followed by the anarchy of the later middle ages, the ruinous convulsion of the Thirty Years War, and the tragic downfall of yesterday. But through it all, the German from his pensive citadel mystic, saint, or thinker, has continued to proclaim the supremacy of spirit, anticipating in varied accents Hamlet's assertion 'that nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so'. Luther proclaimed that religion is measured by the faith in the soul, not by the number of its good works; Kant interpreted experience as a raw datum moulded into significance by the mind; Goethe symbolized man

as Faust, who can deliver his soul from Mephistophiles by its own energy daily renewed.

Only in Russia has the character of Hamlet had a comparable significance, and this in two ways. The most poignantly individual person in Shakespeare, he became a powerful weapon in the hands of the opponents of French classicism and its reduction of character in tragedy to ideal types. The great Moscow critic of the thirties and forties, Vessarion Gregorjevich Bjelinsky, put the antithesis with the sharpest point in his important Hamlet critique of 1838. 'The French once thought (and even to-day they think, though they are convinced otherwise) that the ideal is a collection of traits of a single idea scattered all through nature. . . . Shakespeare is the absolute contrary of this pitiful theory; and that is why the French even to-day cannot make him their own, though they imagine they are enthusiastic for him.' One of the lines of demarcation between the Russian imagination and French classicism is here drawn with precision. But the character of Hamlet had a deeper appeal for Russia. The Russian intellectual, like the German, found himself in Hamlet and salved his impotence under the yoke of the Tsardom with that supposed example of 'weak will in the presence of duty'.<sup>1</sup> Goethe's reading of the character was in 1838 a commonplace in Russia.<sup>2</sup> In that year, however, the great actor Mochalov played the part to crowded houses in Moscow. Bjelinsky took occasion, in the critical essay just noticed, which remains one of the most remarkable interpretations of the character extant, to raise his voice, also, against Goethe's theory of the frail and delicate Hamlet. 'Hamlet is not a frail character; his weak will

<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet, drama Šekspira, i Mochalov v roli Hamleta.* (Collected Works, i. 185.) A vivid sketch of Bjelinsky and his Moscow circle may be found in Herzen's memoirs (*My Life and Thoughts*), Part IV, ch. 25 (E. T. vol. ii).

<sup>2</sup> Bjelinsky, in the article quoted above.

is not native, but induced ; he is a strong man paralysed by the sapping of his faith in men.'<sup>1</sup> But Goethe's Hamlet had too many replicas in Russia not to hold its ground. Turgenjev, Dostoevski, and Nekrassov again and again painted these highly educated, brilliant, ineffectual Russian Hamlets ; and Turgenjev in a pregnant essay contrasted their intellectual hesitations with the unreasoning valour of Don Quixote.

## IX

Goethe led the way in the profounder penetration of Shakespearian character. But it was reserved for the Romantics to illuminate an aspect of his characterization for which neither Goethe nor Schiller had eyes. Goethe had condemned Mercutio and the Nurse as tasteless excrescences in the tragic story. Schlegel not only defended the introduction of grave and comic characters in the same drama (which Johnson had already done), but defended it on grounds of dramatic technique, which he had signally failed to do. He saw that Shakespeare carried further than any predecessor the art of making his characters assist in the portrayal of one another, by 'so combining and contrasting them that they serve to bring out each other's peculiarities'.<sup>2</sup> The grave-diggers are there not because, as Johnson said, 'the vulgar is in real life found close to the sublime', but because they illuminate one facet of the soul of Hamlet.

But the Romantic theory of art was not derived mainly from artistic experience. Their aesthetic, as Lanson said long since, was shot with metaphysical ideas, thanks especially to the contagion of Schelling, with which the thought of Coleridge, not on art only, was to be so deeply imbued. Shakespeare's union of tragedy

<sup>1</sup> *u.s.*, p. 167 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Dramatic Literature*, Lect. xxiii.

and comedy, of sublime and grotesque situations and persons in the same play became a salient example of the 'union of opposites' which it was precisely the characteristic of poetic genius to achieve. Hence the comic intrusions which Voltaire and Goethe had scoffed at, and Johnson had excused, were at length vindicated as the very tokens of consummate art.

With the French Romantics, the blending of tragic and comic motives owed less to metaphysics and more to polemics ; this was the most provocative point it presented to the still vigorous dogma of classicism. In the violent imagination of Hugo it assumed its extremest form, and the Preface to *Cromwell* proclaimed the sublime and the grotesque as the sovereign principles of Romantic art. So naked an antithesis was a poor substitute for the profound psychology of Shakespeare ; but it enabled Hugo here and there to disguise his psychological nudity with a particoloured cloth of opposite traits, as in his prose character of Cromwell himself. It was a Romantic poet rather than a historian who 'turned over the pages of chronicles and memoirs' in search of the true Cromwell; and it was a Romantic poet who saw emerge, instead of the homogeneous criminal of Bossuet, 'a complex, heterogeneous, multiple being, made up of all the opposites, a mixture of much good with much evil, full of genius and of pettiness, a sort of Tiberius-Dandin, the tyrant of Europe and the playing of his family . . . a hypocrite and a fanatic, grotesque and sublime'.<sup>1</sup>

Applied by a more delicate hand, and in a more Shakespearian vein of poetry, the antithetic or paradoxical way with character reappeared at the close of the Romantic period in the Comedies, already noticed, of Musset. Popular melodrama had long before appropriated the rich contrasts of Shakespearian comedy. It was reserved for Musset to achieve a genuine counterpart to

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Cromwell*.

*Much Ado or Twelfth Night* when he admitted his clerical buffoons and comic uncles and waiting-ladies into the delicate vibrating love-story of Cécile or Camille ; or when he imagined these characters themselves, exquisite blends of passion and caprice, exciting a sympathy never far from a smile and sometimes near to tears ; or when, as in two of the most charming of these pieces, the whole economy of the play starts from the declared paradox of the central figure—the caprices of Marianne, or the personified antithesis of the Marquis.<sup>1</sup>

Musset seized with delicate skill a few Shakespearian traits, and reproduced them in a form completely and exquisitely French. But his range was too limited, his psychical vision, though lucid and just within its limits, too superficial, to give him access, as a poet, to the deeper recesses of Shakespearian characterization ; and it was in their psychology, habitually crude, bizarre, or meretricious that the French Romantics, for all their ardent homage to Shakespeare, were least Shakespearian. French and German Romantics alike could capture Shakespeare's dreams, but their brilliant fancy could not compass his boundless mastery of the character of men. The passing of Romanticism meant, in both countries, the dismissal of much that was legendary and superstitious in the fame of Shakespeare. But it meant also a surer concentration of interest and study upon this region, characterization in which his power is most nearly unapproached. In Germany, during the thirty years which followed the Napoleonic wars, Shakespearian character was approached and interpreted with the intellectualist bias communicated to the thinking of his entire generation by the philosophy of Hegel. His

<sup>1</sup> 'C'est un diplomate qui est assez bon musicien; un poète connoisseur en étoffes; un chasseur très-dangereux pour la haie du voisin, très-redoutable au whist pour son partenaire; un homme d'esprit qui dit des bêtises; un fort galant homme qui en fait quelquefois' . . . &c. *On ne saurait penser à tout*, sc. ix.

followers, especially G. G. Gervinus and H. Ulrici, applied to the Shakespearian drama with too little circumspection Hegel's resolutions of all reality into modes of thought. But they were more astray in their reading of Shakespeare's mind than in their interpretation of his characters ; and when all their speculative extravagances have been discounted, a core of fine and penetrating psychological observation remains. And when Hegel too was dismissed, the power of Shakespeare's psychological veracity retained its appeal. It was this that made the most thoroughgoing German Shakespearian of the mid-century, Otto Ludwig (1813-65), the reverent student of Shakespeare's technique, and the unsparing assailant of the rhetoric and sentiment of Schiller. And French Romanticism, too, at the end of the forties, had collapsed under the assaults of Parnassians and realists, it was again the psychology of Shakespeare, wrought into the living stuff of character, that fascinated the great realists of the following generation. Flaubert and Maupassant, Zola and Daudet, were eager and devoted readers, and to the Shakespearian drama of character belongs an undoubted if indefinable share in the creation of the modern novel of 'temperaments'.<sup>1</sup> And then at length the greatest of temperament dramas, *Hamlet*, acquired in Bourget's novelistic pictures of tragic deliberation and dilemma, and elsewhere, the support which it had won a century before in Germany, and which the Lemaitres and the Sarceys of French dramatic criticism continued to refuse to it on the stage.

## X

To sum up. The history of Shakespeare on the Continent is substantially the history of the reactions he has evoked in France, Germany, and Russia. How much deeper than the struggle for territory or power the historic antagonism of the first two reaches is nowhere

<sup>1</sup> Baldensperger, *u.s.*, p. 210.

better seen than in the sharply contrasted fortunes of Shakespeare in their respective cultural *milieus*.

In France he has had to encounter not only a great and splendid national tradition in drama but a society of pronounced mental habits unfavourable to his unreserved acceptance ; imperious in its insistence on logical clearness and simplicity, impatient of the indeterminate and the gradual, easily bored by poetic fancy, promptly offended by brutal truth, trying art as well as manners by standards of civility and breeding, at whatever cost to sincerity and nature, and slow to acknowledge, or even to imagine, foreign excellence of a kind unlike its own. In the French theatre, where these unfavourable conditions were and are present in their acutest form, Shakespeare has even to the present day made little headway. If a succession of reformers from Voltaire to Musset have perceptibly enriched its repertoire with Shakespeare's aid, it has been by showing that unsuspected kinds of dramatic pleasure could be had without infringing the old conditions.

In Germany, on the contrary, Shakespeare encountered a people standing at the beginning, not at the close, of its great age ; a people feeling its way to nationhood, and to self-expression ; a people both ethically and racially akin to his own, and in its art and literature even more disposed than they to put imagination and passion above logic and consistency, rich content above clear outline. In the Shakespearian drama this people instantly hailed a liberating ideal ; and in spite of the reserves made by her own two great poets, he remained an inalienable possession of her stage, and a chief source of every attempted reform till the close of the nineteenth century. And for Goethe and Schiller themselves the creator of Hamlet is a presence not easily put by.

In both countries, further, Shakespeare from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards reacted upon culture outside the drama. In France it was the

clear, positive, inexhaustibly observant portrayer of life whose influence bore fruit. Historians found the suggestion of historic scenes in his dramas of Plantagenet history ; the masters of realism studied his psychology of character.

In Germany, on the other hand, it was the Shakespeare of fairy and of philosophical suggestion who awakened far-reaching response. His folk-lore became a main source of the science of German mythology ; his profound characterization enriched not the realist novel but the new philosophy of aesthetics. And when these powerful attractions had largely spent their force, the elucidation of his work and life remained to become the inexhaustible subject-matter of a new branch of literary *Wissenschaft*, in which Germany for many years led the way, and on which she has left the ineffaceable stamp of her indomitable industry and immense intellectual power, and also of the erudite obsessions which they have fortified and diffused.

If France, even in her moments of reverent approach, has stood aloof from a genius felt to be fundamentally alien to her own, Germany has often projected her own image upon the object of her homage and seen him as more sentimental, more mystic, more metaphysical, than he was.

In Russia the fortunes of Shakespeare were determined by the circumstances and mentality of a small but brilliantly gifted society. Until 1840 they were with rare exceptions far less significant. But she may claim to have brought to the appreciation of Shakespeare a temperament more imaginative than the French, more positive than the German. Until the close of the Romantic age she remained subject to the domination first of French then of German ideas. The German Shakespeare helped (through the medium of Bjelinsky, Polevoi, and others) to emancipate her from the French. Of her own emancipation from both, in the latter half

of the century, and the inception of an epoch of imaginative creation unmatched elsewhere, Pushkin's of her greatest poet was an early prognostication.

In two features, however, nineteenth-century Russia stood alone among the states and commonwealths of Europe: her absolute Tsardom and her simple yet strangely gifted peasantry. Sensitive Russian eyes, injured to these conditions, saw the great Elizabethan, in whose land 'not Amurath an Amurath succeeds, but Harry Harry', and whose country-folks are either dandies or humorists, from angles more extreme, in different senses, than the more analogous residue of Europe. To men of strong and rich vitality, deprived under the Tsars of all voice and social action, Shakespeare gave, in the moving words of one of them 'the possibility of feeling oneself a thinking being, capable of understanding historic problems and the conditions of human life'.<sup>1</sup> One man of supreme genius, on the other hand, found that ideal consolation not in any exotic and remote creations of 'brain-spun' poetry, but in the child-like intelligence and unspoilt heart of the Russian people at his door. Tolstoy's repudiation of Shakespeare was important not for what it explicitly denied but for what it implicitly affirmed. What he rejected Shakespeare for not possessing, the German Romantics had declared to be the very core of his work. These opposite paradoxes result from the range and complexity of a genius the diverse facets of which are seldom equally luminous for different eyes, and where the most elemental instincts of man have place beside his highest reach of ethical vision. To have irradiated by imaginative creation so vast a compass of human experience is a chief glory of Shakespeare, and the principal source of his manifold contribution to the making of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> P. Annenkov (1874); quoted Lirondelle, u.s., p. 216. Fifty years before, Shakespeare had inspired in Pushkin an optimism promptly crushed by events. See the quotation from his letters in the following Essay.

## A RUSSIAN SHAKESPEARIAN A CENTENARY STUDY

*DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ARTHUR SKEMP*

*Arthur Rowland Skemp, a former student of the writer's at the University of Manchester, afterwards Professor of English at the University of Bristol, fell in battle in November 1918. The University of Bristol has since established a series of Skemp Memorial lectures, to be delivered there biennially. The present lecture, delivered at Bristol by the invitation of the University in January 1925, was the first of the series.*

### I

IN a large country house, the seignorial mansion of the village of Michaelovskoe, in the Baltic province of Pskov in north-west Russia, a young Russian nobleman sat, in the summer of 1825, at work upon a tragedy. Alexander Sergéevich Pushkin, then aged twenty-six, was already a poet famous in society and a dangerous person in the eyes of the Tsar, whose sentence of banishment to a remote province he was now in fact undergoing. This tragedy, the principal fruit of his exile, reflects both preoccupations ; for it is permeated by the influence of Shakespeare, then at the height of his vogue in literary Russia ; and Shakespeare is for him above all the dramatic historian of those English Plantagenet kings who most nearly recall the Tsars of Muscovy.

Both the cosmopolitan Russia which faced the West and its civilization, and the Russia of native tradition, which faced the East and the past, had their part in the making of her greatest poet, and shared, if unequally, in the moulding of his principal drama. In Moscow, Pushkin's birthplace, the two Russias met in pictur-

esque encounter, and more nearly on equal terms than anywhere else. In the vast patriarchal mansions of the nobility the old Russia of folk-lore and folk-custom lived on intact in the servants' quarters ; while the Russia of European culture held uncontested sway in the salon. It was in one of these patriarchal mansions that Alexander Pushkin, on 26 May 1799, was born, and the two cultures mingled to an unusual degree in the atmosphere in which he grew up. Neglected by his parents up to his seventh year, he was thrown upon the company of two elderly dependants of the household, Marya Alekseyevna and Arina Rodionovna. Marya was a woman of large experience and keen wits, whose memory was crowded with the stirring events of her youth, and with the traditions and customs of the Russian society of the eighteenth century. Arina, his nurse, later celebrated by him in song, a yet more frequent type of the aged servants of Russian patriarchal homes, was a mine of traditional folk-lore and fairy tales, whose every sentence was a rustic proverb or byword.<sup>1</sup> But the Pushkin palace was also a focus of the fashion and the letters of the capital. There, as a boy, he met the famous historian Karamzin, the leading figure in Moscow letters, and an enthusiastic Shakespearian, who was to befriend him in after-life. Various tutors and governesses helped to equip him with the tongues of cultivated Europe ; he learned German with reluctance, became a perfect master of French, and acquired (with a Miss Bailey) at least the elements of English. But already at twelve he was withdrawn completely from the native and old-world influence of his Moscow environment, and plunged into the European *milieu* of a fashionable and aristocratic Lyceum near St. Petersburg. Seven years later, at the close of his course, he entered the society of the northern capital, and flung himself, with the perilous privilege of his birth and

<sup>1</sup> Skabichevsky's Sketch of Pushkin's Life, prefixed to his Works.

rank, into the whirl of its amusements, interests, and dissipations.

The St. Petersburg of 1817 was still that 'open window upon Europe' which its founder had designed it to be. All through the eighteenth century its society, brilliantly polished at the surface, if infantine or savage at the core, had watched Europe through that open window, and few observers anywhere in Europe were more intimately acquainted with every part of the commanding prospect, or followed with more understanding its changing moods. They read Addison's *Spectator*, like the ladies of Kensington, over their breakfast-tables, were thrilled by the tragedy of *Clarissa*, fed the luxury of grief on Young's *Night Thoughts*, and discovered the charm of 'Sentimentality' in Sterne's *Journey*; *Candide* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and the *Sorrows of Werther* were as familiar in St. Petersburg as at Paris or Berlin; and the most original man of genius in France, Denis Diderot, had become the guest of the imperial blue-stocking Catherine II, who, in the intervals of importing English race-horses and Wedgwood china, signing death-warrants and writing bad verses, held vehement debate on equal terms with her eloquent and pugnacious guest over a table, fortunately interposed. In the eighties this society discovered Shakespeare, and Catherine translated the *Merry Wives*, not the less willingly, perhaps, because another great queen was said to have commanded it from Shakespeare himself. Shakespeare has little reason to be grateful to either of his royal patrons.

The European war, in the issue of which Russia was to play so fateful a part, did not check the tide of European influence. It added volume and momentum to the current derived from England, even while diminishing the vogue of that derived from France. The year 'Twelve' which saw the Russian triumph so magnificently told by Tolstoy, almost coincided with the pheno-

menal apparition of Byron; and Byron, the poet of revolution, became the idol of a society intoxicated with national exultation. What Herzen has called the golden age of Russian literature, the dozen years which intervened between the great 'Year Twelve' and the beginning of the iron despotism of Nicholas I in 1825, was the age of a triumphant romanticism on which Byron set the stamp of his rhetorical splendour, his demoniac personality, and his defiance of accepted canons in art and life. In St. Petersburg, if anywhere in Europe, Byronism was to be seen in action. And Byronism itself provided a brilliant mirror for the purpose.

The young poet who now, at eighteen, entered this society has left an enduring description of it. In the First Canto of his masterpiece, *Evgénie Onyégin*, written six years later, its outward splendour and inner corruption are displayed with a union of wit, eloquence, and poetry which presuppose *Don Juan*; but it is *Don Juan* not so much imitated as emulated, by a man of equal genius, still in his earliest prime. And Pushkin, young as he was, knew the society he painted. The best houses were open to him, and he mingled without reserve in the wildest orgies of gilded youth. He had not a trace of the temper which led his contemporaries Wordsworth, Shelley, and even Byron himself at moments—the Byron of *Manfred* and the Third Canto of *Childe Harold*—into the solitude of Nature. The roar of a great city, the talk and music and dance in crowded drawing-rooms, the midnight revel of the clubs, drew him irresistibly; and to their fascination was soon added the subtler lure of applause. He threw off verses, satires, epigrams in great and facile abundance, and became a literary lion before he was twenty.

But this impetuous career underwent, in 1820, a sudden check. A satire imprudently outspoken awakened the attention of the fatherly Tsar, Alexander I. 'We must send this young man to Siberia,' said the

ruler, now in his old age a devout mystic, and more than ever concerned to bring his erring children to reason. But Pushkin's old schoolmaster, and his father's friend Karamzin, intervened, and the sentence was changed to an appointment in the south, as a clerk in the local administration at Kishinev and Odessa. It was a mild banishment, which permitted him to travel by way of the Caucasus, and to spend delightful weeks in the house of his friend Rayevsky, on the beautiful shore of the Black Sea, translating Voltaire and learning to read Byron in the original.<sup>1</sup> The four following years developed still farther the unsolved dilemmas of Pushkin's complex and fiery nature. His escapades in the motley cosmopolitan society of Kichinev and of the great Black Sea port were the despair of his official chief. But all the time he was producing lyrics and verse-tales of classical finish and beauty. It is natural to think of the life that Byron was leading, in these very years in Italy, and the whole society which Pushkin frequented and led here as in the capital passionately Byronist. But the parallel is incomplete. Pushkin's outward life resembled Byron's as much as the excesses of a young civil servant can resemble those of a nobleman of fortune. But there is nothing dissolute in Pushkin's verse. Byron's artistry, whatever his genius, was as imperfect as his moral self-control. His splendours are mostly impulsive or capricious, like his noble deeds, and intermingled, like them, with abysmal falls. His style is rich, coloured, figurative, charged with a rhetoric sometimes inspired, sometimes meretricious. But Pushkin, during these days of boisterous adventure, was giving the first example in Russia of a poetry classically pure, simple, reticent, flawless, and this in a generation carried away by the Romantic cult of whatever, in style or subject, is

<sup>1</sup> Skabichevsky, *u.s.*, § iv: 'Praktikovalsya v Angliiskom yazyke, i eta praktika sostoyala v chtenii Bairona.' This is important as bearing on his power to read Shakespeare in the original.

violent, emphatic, and impassioned, or mysterious, suggestive, indefinite, and incomplete.

Once more, however, the incurable exuberance of Pushkin the young official deflected the fortunes of Pushkin the impeccable poet. Some of his classically chaste and flawless verses having taken the annoying form of a satire on his chief, Count Vorontsov, the latter complained to St. Petersburg. Even more shocking to the devout government of Alexander was a letter, opened in the post, from Pushkin himself to an intimate friend, in which the poet described himself as 'taking lessons in pure atheism' from an Englishman who had 'proved' it in a book of a thousand pages. Incidentally we learn from the same letter that he was reading Shakespeare, as well as Goethe and the Bible : unluckily he added that he preferred both the two former to the last.<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Minister of all the Russias and his official deputy in Odessa discussed in horrified tones what must be done to prevent this double offender from encouraging the others. They decided to send him, in forced retirement, to his father's country house, at the family village of Michaelovskoe, near Pskov, in NW. Russia. On 30 July 1824 he set out on his journey, of nearly a thousand miles, by a route carefully prescribed to prevent any meetings with evil-minded, or unduly impressionable friends, on the way ; and on 9 August he arrived. In spite of painful friction with his father, a timid conservative, who saw in his son's disgrace a prelude to his own ruin, Pushkin's two years at Michaelovskoe were the happiest and most fruitful of his short life. They are vividly reflected in the picture of his hero's life in the country in the Fourth Canto of *Onyégin*. Rising early, after a bathe in the river or in an ice-cold bath, he spent the morning in writing, the afternoon in long walks or rides, always

<sup>1</sup> Letter to an unknown friend in Moscow, from Odessa, March-April, 1824.

with poetry as his companion, and the evening in talks with his old nurse Arina, now housekeeper, but still the mine of folk-lore and country ways and sayings that he had known as a child ; or in the convivial and congenial society of a neighbouring country-house.<sup>1</sup> To be sure the *rus inficetum* was not his affair, and he longed for the roar of town. But such a retreat, with leisure, society, and solitude, friends, books, and poetry without stint, was no unendurable punishment for a young poet lately tied to an office-desk in Odessa.

## II

It was under such conditions that Pushkin came at length seriously under the spell of Shakespeare, and that he produced his most important original drama the tragedy of *Boris Godunov*. Before discussing its Shakespearean bearings, it will be well to dwell upon the source of the purely Russian story which Pushkin used. It is taken from a sensational episode in Russian history, as told in the classical Russian History of his old friend Karamzin, and it is well known in England from the opera based upon Pushkin's play.<sup>2</sup> It is, in brief, the career of an astute man, in favour with the Tsar Ivan the terrible, who seized the throne of Muscovy after Ivan's death in 1598.

He secured his position, as he thought, by having Ivan's lawful heir Dmitri, a boy of twelve, secretly murdered. He is accepted as Tsar, by the Church,

<sup>1</sup> The two daughters of this family, Anna and Evpratsia Osipov, were the originals of Tatiana and Olga in *Evgénie Onégin*.

<sup>2</sup> *Boris Godunov* was taken as the basis of an opera to which two of the greatest of Russian composers have contributed, Mussorgski's *Boris Godunov* was produced at the Imperial Theatre Marie at St. Petersburg in 1874; it was received with enthusiasm by the younger generation and performed twenty times in the same season. Twenty years later, in 1896, the orchestration was remodelled by Rimski Korsakov. (C. Nabokoff in *Times Lit. Suppl.*, 19 June 1924.)

nobles, and people. But he has no friends. The nobles fawn on him, but he knows, and they know that he knows, and he knows that they know that he knows, that they are playing their game and biding their time. The people are malleable, their hearts are easily won, and no less easily lost. For five years (1598 to 1603) he holds his ground. Then appears a Pretender, professing to be Ivan's son and rightful heir, the boy universally believed to have been murdered. He is in reality a young monk, with a genius too daring for the cloister. This 'False Dmitri' escapes to Poland, the hereditary foe of Russia, where he is received with open arms and equipped with an army and a bride. He then marches on Moscow, nobles and people turn against Boris, and the usurper and his children are destroyed. The story as thus presented by Pushkin and Karamzin summarily answers a question on which tradition is indecisive, and which vitally concerns the character of the hero. Was he, or was he not, guilty of the murder of the Tsarevitch popularly ascribed to him. The great critic V. N. Bjelinski (*b.* 1810), the Russian Sainte-Beuve, in an elaborate review of Pushkin's works,<sup>1</sup> takes him severely to task for thus implicitly following Karamzin at the cost, as he contends, of both historic justice and the dramatic quality of his drama. With the former question we are not here concerned. But on the point of art the opinion of this distinguished Russian is important. Boris, he holds, however he came to the throne, would have fallen in any case, because he was merely a clever man attempting a task in which only genius could have saved him. The ascription to him of a mean and treacherous crime was therefore unnecessary to explain his ultimate ruin. And, worse than that, it turned him from a tragic into a melodrama character, a grinning hypocrite, tortured, even in his success by secret strings

<sup>1</sup> *Otechestvenniya Zapiski*, vol. 43, 1845. (Bjelinski's *Izbrannyya Sochineniya*, 1907, ii. 850 f.)

of conscience. The character of Boris hence fails in wholeness and roundness, and becomes a sort of mosaic picture, or a statue composed of gold, silver, lead, wood, marble, clay. Thus Pushkin's *Godunov* appears to the readers now honourable, now base, now a hero, now a coward, now a wise and just ruler, now a senseless criminal—and there is no key to these contradictions but reproaches of his guilty conscience. For this reason Pushkin's tragedy appears somewhat undefined, and does not produce the sharp and concentrated impression which the reader, enchanted by its incessant beauty of detail, has a right to expect. Why did Pushkin, great poet as he was, asks Bjelinski, thus ignore the claims of art and poetry, for fear of offending against Karamzin's History? And why did his poetic instinct fail to grasp the ensemble of his tragedy and show clear vision only in detail? Bjelinski's answer is, in brief, that Pushkin was fundamentally an aristocrat and a man of tradition, and that the conservative in him, requiring an exact fidelity to the historical record, overpowered the poet and the dramatist, inducing the one to violate his instinct for imaginative wholeness, and the other to give up tragedy for melodrama.

It may be rash for a foreign critic to dispute the judgement of Pushkin's great contemporary. But Bjelinski's statement of the case is on two grounds very difficult to accept. In the first place, the poet's representation of Boris as really guilty of the crime, whether justified by history or not, was surely a capital stroke for the plot; and if this sensational incident made for melodrama, might it not be in the way of Hamlet, a tissue of 'melodramatic' events, and yet supreme tragedy? And as for Boris's unity of character, Bjelinski admits that his guilt, if accepted, supplies a key to his otherwise inexplicable variations.

But there is a further reason. Bjelinski was a devoted

lover of Shakespeare, especially of the great tragedies. He had written, some years earlier (1838), the most penetrating study of *Hamlet* yet produced in Russia. But he betrays no consciousness that Pushkin wrote *Boris Godunov* with Shakespeare in his mind, as his letters, since published, show to have been the case; nor yet, what the drama itself might well have suggested, that Shakespeare's example has profoundly influenced its matter and style, without effecting its substantial fidelity to Karamzin, but perhaps providing a fuller and finer justification for that fidelity than Bjelinski thought. It remains to attempt a clearer indication of the nature and limits of that influence.

In the first place, his occupation with Shakespeare during the months when *Boris* was on the stocks is evident, as just stated, from his letters. The letter of March 1829, above quoted, shows that he was then already reading him. In September 1825 he writes to his friend N. N. Rayevski:

'I have not read Calderon nor Lope, but what a man is this Shakespeare! I can't get away from him! How poor is Byron as a tragic poet beside him; Byron never conceived but one character.'

It may seem strange to us that the part of Shakespeare which specially arrested and impressed this Russian was the part which is most purely, almost provincially English, those 'long jars' of York and Lancaster of which Ben Jonson spoke so disdainfully—the sequence of the Plantagenet Histories; together with the Roman History of *Julius Caesar*.

But it is not difficult to see why in the Histories, even beyond Shakespeare's work at large, Pushkin found great poetry suited to his creative needs. For they pointed to an experience and a cast of genius which in at least four points resembled his own. At these four points there was fertilizing contact; and these still imperfectly vitalized aspects of Pushkin's experience and

genius became articulated and explicit in his original creation.

1. He found in the Histories the poetry of the *national past*. The Russian national past, represented by its folk-lore and feudal traditions, had been familiar to Pushkin from boyhood; Shakespeare showed him, as he had shown Goethe in *Goetz* and Schiller in *Wallenstein*, and was already showing to the French Romantics, what treasures were to be won from the drama of the national political history.

2. The drama of Russian political history was, even more than that of Plantagenet England, woven of sanguinary dynastic feuds. Pushkin in his own person had known something of the arbitrariness of autocracy. The history of crimes like those of a John or a Richard III had, for the subjects of Alexander I, the grim fascination of experiences which might at any moment become their own.

3. Shakespeare's Histories move almost wholly in the great world of nobles and statesmen. Pushkin already as a young man had mixed intimately in the corresponding world of St. Petersburg. His own ancestor Pushkin had played a great part under the Tsar Ivan the Terrible and his successor. Shakespeare's Histories showed him how the plots and intrigues of high life could be turned into living drama.

4. (and this was the greatest thing): Pushkin found in Shakespeare a drama which was fundamentally real; a creation like life, not a projection of his own personality under other names; and a drama which was not *afraid* of reality or of any part of it. In the light of Shakespeare's profound veracity Byron now looked meretricious and even Corneille and Racine stilted and artificial. The great Spaniards he did not know, but all other dramatists grew pale in comparison. 'Other dramatists,' he writes to his friend, 'when they have conceived a character, insist on making everything he says

bear its impress. A conspirator says, "Give me some drink" in his quality of conspirator, and it is only absurd. Hence their stiffness and timidity in dialogue. But read Shakespeare, he is never afraid of compromising his men ; he makes them talk with all the impulsiveness of life, being confident that they will speak in character when place and time require.'

But in addition to these four general points of attraction, Pushkin, reading the Histories with the story of Boris in his mind, found in the Histories a crowd of stimulating parallels. That lurid passage of Russian history might almost be taken for a transcript, in Russian terms, of the type of situation to which Shakespeare in the Histories most constantly recurs. From *King John* to *Richard III* and in the cognate *Julius Caesar*, through all that surging complexity of historic circumstance, we are occupied with a dynastic struggle for power, a struggle carried on most often by men whose own possession of power is precarious, or unlawful, or both. The great sequence of nine plays opens with a challenge to one usurper and ends with the overthrow of another. John has usurped his throne, Richard II is driven from his, Henry IV displaces by force the king by right, and involves his successors in his wrong. Henry V, at the height of his power, prays that God's anger may not be visited on him at Agincourt. Henry VI is destroyed by the enemies of his House, and Richard III, the destroyer, himself usurps the throne and is himself destroyed. Two of these usurping kings try to secure themselves by secretly putting the rightful heirs, young boys, to death ; and the murder both of Arthur and of the young princes in the Tower is the false step which makes the ruin of John and of Richard inevitable. We have searching glimpses into their minds as they contrive these crimes, or shudder at the memory of them, or are struck with fear at the menace of the Nemesis they had not foreseen; we see John drop-

ping his dark hints to Hubert, Richard with more cynical self-possession, but still in a whisper, giving his death-commission to Tyrrel. All these rulers, again, have to face, master, or make terms with, the same formidable peril—the power of their own nobles. John, Richard II, Henry VI, and Richard III after a struggle succumb; Henry IV after a struggle masters them; Henry V wins them to his side.

It is now, perhaps, not difficult to understand how the story of Boris, in Pushkin's hands, came to offer those characteristics on which Bjelinski so severely commented, and why in particular he adopted so decisively the theory that Boris ordered the murder of the Tsarevitch. We may surmise that even if Karamzin had acquitted him, the young poet who had recently been thrilled by Shakespeare's pictures of John and Richard's dealings with boy-heirs who stood in their way, would hardly have let him off. At the outset of the play Boris accepts the crown with a show of reluctance like Caesar at the hands of the representatives of Church and State, whose no less feigned eagerness to offer it he has diplomatically secured. His relation to his nobles is, like John's with his Barons, a veiled feud, ending in civil war. But his overthrow is precipitated, like Richard II's and Richard III's, by the appearance of a rival claimant to the throne. He is thus destroyed, but before his death addresses, like Henry IV, a last speech of counsel to his young son.

### III

No doubt these similar events happen in a political environment profoundly different. A Russian Tsar was more dangerous, and also less secure, than an English king. He had absolute power, but he had not either with or against him the strength of enthroned law and established custom. When Henry V succeeds his

father, he laughs at the fears of those who expected him like the Turk to send his rivals to the block :

Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds,  
But Harry Harry,

and a like contrast held between England and Boris's and Pushkin's Russia. In the tenser atmosphere of peril and fear created by autocracy, political rivalry becomes more secret, strategy more profound ; appearances more deceptive, professions more hollow. Pushkin, too, an aristocrat and a descendant of one of Boris's bitterest opponents, could interpret Boris's dilemmas and strategy from a nearer vantage-ground than any from which the Stratford player could interpret those of Richard or John.

But in the story of Boris, Pushkin also saw an opening for that which, as we saw, most deeply impressed and kindled him in Shakespeare, his fearless truth within the sphere of poetry. He approached Shakespeare, we must remember, from the side of Racine, whose characters he wrongly regarded as abstract types, and of Byron, who could draw, he thought, only one character, his own. He saw (as the letter to Rayevski quoted above shows) that Shakespeare's characters were not only infinitely various, but that, like real men and women, though always true to their character, they were not always exemplifying it. That Shakespeare's conspirators, for instance, as in *Julius Caesar*, are not, like Jonson's, too absorbed in their task to do anything but conspire. They will conspire with entire competence when the time comes ; but meanwhile they are cool and detached enough to talk about the weather or to discuss at what point of the horizon the sun will rise. His heroic figures can unbend ; his villains can be gay and jocular ; Caesar has sublime, but also childish, moments. And then, Pushkin revelled in Shakespeare's fearless introduction of everything in life that he wanted for his play

—homely folks, like the cobbler who exchanges gibes with the tribune, or the rustic scarecrows whom Falstaff leads to Shrewsbury; fools and clowns and grave-diggers; and then his delightful children—Brutus's boy Lucius overcome by sleep as he reads, or little York gaily chaffing uncle Richard.

All this has left its decisive mark on the characterization of Pushkin's Tragedy. Bjelinsky has, we think, under-estimated Pushkin's success in imitating the flexibility—or shall we say the opportunism?—of Shakespearean characterization. If Boris is a 'mosaic' of contrasted moods, the mosaic composes into a rich and living picture. It does not trouble the student of Shakespeare to see the crafty tyrant Boris, in undress, in his nursery amusing himself with his boy and girl. And in this matter of the introduction of children Pushkin, being no docile copyist, but a rather headstrong and self-assertive young man, sometimes goes beyond Shakespeare on Shakespeare's own path—bringing, for instance, not only children but a baby in arms, coaxed and threatened by its mother, to assist at Boris's coronation.

And he carries out too in a way of his own the veracity which he rightly recognized in Shakespeare's dramatic speech. Shakespeare can make a highly figured diction, which no one would ever use in ordinary life, seem natural, because it is charged with the emotion which the speaker feels, but which ordinary words only haltingly convey. But Pushkin seeks the same truth by way of a perfectly limpid and unadorned simplicity. Such unforgettable lines as Elizabeth's address to the Tower, as her two boys are led in, never to return alive—

Rude ragged nurse, old sullen playfellow  
For tender princes, use my babies well,

could never be found in Pushkin.

That Pushkin did not employ this simple, unadorned dramatic speech merely from the realist's desire to imi-

tate life as literally as possible is plain from his habitual use of *verse*. He follows Shakespeare's example both in adopting this ideal form for the most part, and in not adopting it uniformly. Most of the scenes are in blank verse, which Pushkin was among the first to use in Russian, as Lessing fifty years before had been in German ; and his blank verse, like Lessing's, is noble and beautiful, if rarely touched with Shakespearian magic. But Pushkin, contrary to all but Elizabethan precedent, intermingles the blank-verse scenes with scenes in prose ; while an occasional scene in lyric stanzas can only be partially paralleled, even amongst the Elizabethans, by the banquet scene in *Romeo and Juliet* or the scene with Adriana in the *Comedy of Errors*.

Lastly, there were features in the story of Boris which had no parallel in Shakespeare's Histories. Such was the old convent chronicler Pimen, who had witnessed the murder of the boy, the son of Tsar Ivan and the rightful heir, and recorded it in his chronicle for posterity to know ; such was the heroine, Marina, a type of worldly coquette unknown to Shakespeare ; while the Pretender's adventures and character resemble those of the French, rather than the English, Henry IV, and are confessedly reproduced with him in mind.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

I now propose to summarize the play itself, translating portions of a few crucial and characteristic scenes in the metre of the original.<sup>2</sup> It consists of some twenty-four scenes, about the number usual in a Shakespearian play, but not divided into acts. The action opens at the

<sup>1</sup> App. § 5.

<sup>2</sup> These scenes were translated without any knowledge of Mr. Hayes's excellent version of the entire play. Subsequent comparison has enabled me to correct some inaccuracies. In a few passages the version is compressed.

moment when Boris is being urged to accept the Tsardom, and is refusing the offered crown more stubbornly than Caesar (*Jul. Caes.*, I. ii), and with even better reason. For Caesar has only to conciliate republican suspicion ; Boris has to silence the suspicion that he has murdered the little Tsarevitch. For what could be his motive, people are meant to ask, if he will not be Tsar himself ? Two of the nobles, Shuisky and Voratynski, are discussing the situation. Shuisky, the astutest of the court circle, and the most intimate with Boris, is convinced that he is the murderer, but holds the secret for future use, assuming meantime a show of devoted loyalty. The scene then changes to an open Place, where the ceremonial humbug of the proffered, refused, and finally accepted crown is being enacted before the eyes of the Moscow populace, assembled in their thousands to watch and applaud. Most of them are eager that he should accept, but there are some caustic fellows too who only feign devotion. A few sentences will illustrate how far Pushkin, with *Julius Caesar* in mind, was ready to go beyond Shakespeare in that realistic painting of the humours of a crowd, which had offended the classicist taste of Voltaire :

### BORIS

*Cit.* How is it going?

*Second Cit.* Still

He holds off obdurately, but there's hope.

*Woman (with a child).*

Tu, tu ! don't cry ! See bogy, bogy, coming,

He'll carry thee off with him ! Tu, tu, . . . don't cry !

*First C.* Can't we get nearer in beyond the fence ?

*Second C.* Impossible ! Why the whole place is thronged.

All Moscow's crowded here. See, walls and roofs

And every story of the belfry spire,

The domes of churches, and the very crosscs

Are crammed with people. . . .

*First.* What is that noise ?

*Second.* Ay hark . . . what is that noise?

The people's murmur; there they fall like waves  
Row after row, still more and more! Now brothers,  
Now it's our turn: quick, down upon your knees!

(*People on their knees, cries and weeping.*)

Ah, mercy, little father! Be our ruler!

Be our father, our Tsar!

*First Cit. (aside).* What do they weep for?

*Second C.* How should we know? That is the Nobles' business.  
Not ours.

*Old Wom.* Why, what! Just when we've got to cry  
You must be mum! I'll do for thee! The bogey!  
Cry, you spoilt rogue (*child cries*). Now then!

*One.* They're all crying.  
Boys, let us cry a bit!

*Second.* I'm trying, brother;  
No good.

*First.* I too. Has any one an onion?  
Let's rub our eyes red.

*Second.* No, I'll spit and smear them.  
What is up now there?

*First.* Cannot make it out!

*People.* The crown for him! He's Tsar! He has accepted!  
Boris our Tsar! Boris! Long live Boris!

The five years that followed Boris's coronation saw no outward disturbance of his power, and offered little material for that part of drama which consists in action and event. But the quiescence was only on the surface. The ominous symptoms which Boris's triumph could not conceal became steadily more formidable and continuous, and his resolute efforts to play the part of the benevolent autocrat only increased the tension between ruler and people. By the close of the fifth year (1603) the imposing edifice of his power is shaken to its foundations, and a slight interference from outside will suffice to overthrow it.\* Hence the swift and easy triumph of the Pretender. But Boris, like Macbeth, is a tragic figure long before his fall. The bitterness of disillusion

is upon him already : he can say with Lady Macbeth : 'all's had, all's spent when our desires are had without content.' Sovereignty has lost its relish when once enjoyed, and added to that satiety, he is haunted by the horror of his crime. In an impressive soliloquy he lays bare the situation :

I have reached the height of power,  
Already for five years I have reigned in peace,  
But yet I am not happy.

He had tried to win the people by generosity; but all in vain, 'they love only the dead.' If their houses burnt down, he built them new ones, and they accused him of the fire. Whoever died he was the cause of their death. Who can get the better of malignant calumny? A man with a good conscience, perhaps :

But if there be a single flaw in it  
The soul's enflamed as with a festering wound,  
The heart o'erbrims with poison; accusations  
Knock as with beating hammers in our ears,  
All things are loath to us, our head goes round  
And boys blood-dabbled hover before our eyes.

To this inner tragedy the outer is about to be added. The next scene opens in the convent cell, where the young monk Grigóry Otrépyov is sitting with the venerable chronicler Pimen. Grigóry's imagination has been fired by the records of successful usurpation, and his hot blood is eager to live them instead of copying them. The aged chronicler Pimen himself had known that brilliant life of adventure in his prime, and had only withdrawn to the quiet of the convent cell as an old man to describe it. Grigóry finds himself a monk in the years when he ought to be a soldier and a lover, and he resolves to be ruled by his years and not by his vows. And the old chronicler unwittingly gives him the cue, by describing graphically the murder of the Tsarevitch, which he had himself witnessed, and how the murderer

had confessed that Boris had ordered it. ‘He would be just your age now, and would have reigned, but God willed otherwise. There ends my chronicle,’ the old man closes, ‘and now I am weary; and I hand over my old pen to you, Grigóry; do you continue my work.’ But Grigóry has other ideas :

Boris! Boris! Before thee Russia trembles,  
None in thy presence dares so much as mention  
The fate of the unhappy Tsarevitch;<sup>1</sup>  
But here meantime a hermit in a cloister  
Is making of thee terrible report,  
And thou wilt not escape from the world’s judgement,  
As thou wilt not escape the wrath of God.

So Grigóry escapes from the convent and hurries to the Lithuanian border, where we next see him in a picturesque and exciting tavern scene, on the frontier, in grave peril of his life from the guards whom Boris has posted there to stop precisely the runaway monk. There is nothing at all resembling it in Shakespeare—it is more like a scene from Scott—but we may think of the way in which the action of Henry IV takes its ease in the Eastcheap tavern, and sports with its revellers and its voluble hostess, in the intervals of the high matters of state policy and civil war.

*A Tavern on the Lithuanian Frontier.*

MISAIL and VARLAAM, monks; GRIGÓRY OTRÉPYOV, secular.  
*The Hostess of the Inn.*

H. What can I serve you, honoured fathers?

M. What God provides, Hostess. Hast thou wine?

H. Surely, my fathers! I’ll bring it anon. (*Exit.*)

M. (*to Gr.*) Why so downcast, comrade? Here’s the Lithuanian frontier thou wast so anxious to reach.

Gr. Till I am across it I shall not be at ease.

<sup>1</sup> This title, in Russian accented *Tsarévich*, is in the translation treated as an English word and accented as is usual in English.

*V.* What is Lithuania to thee? Look at Misail and me a sinful man, when once we had slipped out of the monastery, we cared nothing whether it was Lithuania or Russia, fiddle or dulcimer, it was all one to us if only we had some wine,— and here it comes! . . .

*M.* Well said, brother Varlaam.

*Host.* Here it is, my fathers.

*M.* Thanks. God bless thee! (*Sings.*)

You don't join? (*to Grig.*)

*Gr.* Not inclined. . . .

*M.* Every one to his liking.

*V.* But, Paradise to the drinker, father Misail! Drink a cup to our hostess. And, faith, when I drink I don't like sober men. Tipsiness is one thing, stiffness another; if thou wilt live like us, good,—if not, take thyself off. Get away, a vagabond is no companion for a priest. . . .

*M.* Let him be, father Varlaam.

(*Grig. inquires of the Hostess as to the road to Lithuania, and the distance.*)

*H.* Not far, by night you may be there, but for the barriers and imperial guard.

*Gr.* What, barriers! what does that mean?

*H.* Some one has escaped from Moscow, and there are orders to hold up every one and examine them.

*Gr. (to himself)* There's for you, my son.

*V.* Ha, companion! Hobnobbing with the hostess. Thou dost not want vodka, but thou likest a young woman.

*M.* Well said, father Varlaam.

*Gr. (to hostess)* And what do the guards want? Who has escaped from Moscow?

*H.* Lord knows, if it's a thief or a highwayman they want; 'tis only certain they stop honest folks from going forward. And what will they get? Nothing at all, not so much as a spotted dog; as if there weren't another way over the frontier, besides the high road! Why, from here you take the turn to the left, then go by a path to a chapel on the Chekan brook, and then straight across the marshes to Hlopino, and from there to Zaharyév, and then any child will guide you to the hills. As to these guards, we only know that they bother passers-by, and rob us poor folks.

(*A noise is heard.*)

What's that? Ah, 'tis them, cursed fellows, going their rounds.

*G.* Hostess, isn't there another bit of a corner in the cottage?

*H.* Nay, friend, I'd be glad to hide myself. . . .

(*Guards enter.*)

*Gd.* Good-day, hostess!

*H.* I beg you to be heartily welcome, honoured guests.

*1st Gd.* (*to the other*) Here is a bit of drinking going on; a find for us. (*To the monks*) Who are you?

*V.* We are old and holy men, peaceful fathers, on our way to the villages to collect Christian alms for the monastery.

*1st G.* (*to Gr.*) And thou?

*M.* Our companion.

*Gr.* A lay brother of the suburbs; I have accompanied these fathers to the frontier; now I am on my way home.

*M.* So you have changed your mind. . . .

*Gr.* (*aside*) Whisht.

*1st G.* Hostess, bring more wine, and we'll drink with these fathers, and have a bit of talk with them.

*2nd G.* (*aside*) The young fellow seems bare; nought to be got from him; but the old fellows—

*1st G.* Hold thy peace, we'll settle with them directly.—

Well, my fathers, and how goes business?

*V.* Ill, my son, ill! Present-day Christians are niggards. They love money, they hide it. They give little to God. . . . They are all out to make money and cheat, they think of worldly wealth, not of saving their souls. You visit and visit, you pray and pray; sometimes you don't pray a farthing out of them in three days. What a sin! A week, two weeks, go by, you look in your bag, and there's so little, you're ashamed to show it at the monastery: what's to be done? you are so sad, you drink the rest, and a poor comfort too. Ah, bad it is! it seems our last days are come.—

*H.* (*weeping*) The Lord keep us and save us!

(*While V. is speaking, 1st G. examines M. attentively.*)

*1st G.* (*to G. 2.*) Hast thou the Tsar's edict on thee?

*2nd G.* Ay.

*1st G.* Give it here.

*M.* Why dost eye me so fixedly?

*1st G.* Look here, a vile heretic has escaped from Moscow, Grigor Otrépyov. Hast heard that?

*M.* Nay.

*1st G.* Thou hast not heard. Good. And the Tsar has ordered this runaway heretic to be taken and hanged. Dost thou know that?

*M.* Nay.

*1st G. (to V.)* Can'st thou read?

*V.* I learnt it as a boy, but have forgotten it.

*1st G. (to M.)* And thou?

*M.* The Lord has not taught me.

*1st G.* Look at this imperial edict.

*M.* What is it to me?

*1st G.* I guess this runaway heretic, thief and rogue is—thee!

*M.* I? My good sir, what do you mean?

*1st G.* Stand! Hold the doors, we'll soon find the truth.

*H.* O these cursed torturers! And they won't leave this old man alone!

*1st G.* Who is here that can read?

*Gr. (coming forward)* I can read. . . .

*1st G. (giving him the edict)* Read it aloud.

*Gr. (reads)* Grigóry, an unworthy secular of the Chudov monastery, of the family of Otrépyov, fell into heresy, and dared, at the devil's bidding, to annoy the holy brothers by all manner of illegal devices. And inquiry being made, he escaped, this accursed Grigóry, to the Lithuanian border—

*1st G. (to M.)* Who's that but you?

*Gr.* And the Tsar orders him to be taken?

*1st G.* And hanged!

*Gr.* It doesn't say hanged.

*1st G.* A lie! They don't put it all in writing. Read: 'taken and hanged.'

*Gr.* And hanged. And the age of the thief Grigóry (*looking at V.*) is fifty; medium stature, forehead bald, beard grey, belly stout.

(*All look at V.*)

*1st G.* Boys! Here is Grishka! Seize him, hold him! I never thought it or guessed it!

*V. (snatching the paper.)* Stay, rogues! What sort of Grishka am I? Look, fifty years old, beard grey, and belly stout! No brother! The young man has played a trick on me. I have not read for years, and can't make it out well, but I shall make it out as hanging's in question: (*spells it out*) 'And his

age is 20.' How, brother, where is your '50'? Do you see that '20'?

*2nd G.* Ay, I mind, it was 20; they told us so.

*1st G. (to Grig.)* So, brother, you seem to be a joker (*during the reading, Gr. stands with his head hanging and his hand in his bosom.*)

*V. (continuing).* Of low stature, chest broad, one hand shorter than the other, eyes blue, hair reddish, a wart on his cheek and another on his forehead. Isn't that you, friend?

(*Grig. draws his dagger suddenly, they all scatter before him, he rushes to the window.*)

*1st and 2nd G.* Hold him! hold him!

(*All pursue him in disorder.*)

In the very next scene we learn in a very dramatic way what has ensued. Place and time are handled with more than Shakespearian boldness. It would have formed in Shakespeare the beginning of a new Act. We are back in Moscow, and some weeks at least have elapsed. For Grigory has already reached Poland, has declared himself to be the Tsarevitch, and has been accepted with Polish enthusiasm by Polish society and the Polish king; while the first intimation of these sensational events has just reached his friends in Moscow.

The scenes in Moscow which follow are the crucial scenes of the tragedy. The position and tension of the opposed forces are not unlike that in the fourth act of *Richard III*, where Richard broaches the murder of the princes to Buckingham, receives an evasive reply, and presently learns of the approach of Richmond. But as imagined by the young Shakespeare the game of politics is still comparatively elementary; diplomatic duplicity is not long maintained, disguises are impatiently thrown off and suspicions declared. Richard having confided his plan to Buckingham and meeting with only a hesitating response, has no further use for him, and roughly repels him. Buckingham knows that he is lost, and flies. In Pushkin, the descendant of genera-

tions of nobles versed in the astute diplomacy for which Russia has always been famous, the strategic game is on a far more advanced stage of duplicity.

The first scene is in the palace of Shuisky. It is the close of a brilliant evening party; the guests are just taking leave. One of them, Pushkin (the ancestor of the poet), lingers behind, a hint that he has important news, and then, in the utmost secrecy, after dismissing the servants and closing doors and windows, reveals that the Tsarevitch is alive in Poland. Shuisky is incredulous, but sees how powerful an engine even a false claimant will be for overthrowing Boris. The thing is to be kept absolutely secret. But already Boris's friends are aware of this suspicious meeting, and proceed to disclose it to him. These high matters of state are not introduced at once; Boris as yet knows nothing, we see him with his children, unsuspecting of peril, like Lady Macduff with her boys. The girl, Kseniya, had been betrothed to the murdered Dmitri and is still mourning for him. Her father ironically consoles her.

Why, Kseniya! Why, my beloved girl!  
 Already a widow and still a plighted maid!  
 Still grieving for your bridegroom's sad decease?  
 My dearest child, I clearly was not fated  
 To be the founder of your wedded bliss.  
 I very likely have offended Heaven  
 Too far to be the builder of your fortune.  
 Innocent creature! why should *you* be hurt?

Then he turns to his boy Feódor, the Tsarevitch, who is busy making a map of his father's empire. The boy explains it:

A map of Muscovy! our entire dominion  
 From end to end. Here you see Moscow, here is  
 Novgorod, Astrachan, and the Black Sea,  
 Here the impassable forests of Perm, and here  
 Siberia....

Ts. Capital! There's the fruit of education!

You see as in a bird's-eye glance the whole  
 Tsardom at once, frontiers and towns and rivers.  
 Study, my son, knowledge abridges for us  
 The experience of our swiftly flowing life.  
 Some time or other, and it may be soon,  
 All the dominions you have just been plotting  
 So cleverly on paper, will be yours;—  
 Study, my son, and you will understand  
 More clearly and easily what it is to rule.

(*His brother SEMJÓN GODUNÓV enters.*)

But here comes Godunóv with a report.

(*He dismisses his daughter and her governess: FÉDOR remains.*)

What have you got to say, Semjón Nikitich?

*Sem.* To-day at dawn the Chamberlain—his servant  
 And Pushkin's came to me with information.

*Ts.* Well?

*Sem.* Pushkin's servant stated, first of all,  
 That yester-morning at their house arrived  
 A courier from Cracow, and an hour  
 Later without dispatches was dismissed.

*Ts.* Arrest the courier.

*Sem.* Men are in pursuit.

*Ts.* And of Shuiski?

*Sem.* He was entertaining  
 His friends to supper,—both the Miloslawsksis,  
 The Buturlins, Michaël Saltykov,  
 And Pushkin, and some others. It was late  
 When they broke up. Pushkin alone remained.  
 And with his host in closest secrecy  
 Held further long discussion.

*Ts.* Instantly  
 Summon Shuisky.

*Sem.* Sire! He is here already.

*Ts.* Call him to me. (*SEM. exit.*)

Dealings with Lithuania? What is this?  
 The rebel race of Pushkin are my enemies  
 And Shuiski does not deserve my trust,  
 Pliant, but bold and cunning—

(*Enter SHUISKY.*)

Prince, I want  
 A word with you. Apparently, however,

You come yourself on business; pray speak first.

*Sh.* This is so, sire; in duty bound I bring you  
Important information.

*Ts.* I attend.

*Sh.* (*pointing to FÉDOR*) But, Sire?

*Ts.* Whatever Prince Shuiski knows  
The Tsarevitch may know. Speak freely.

*Sh.* From Lithuania we have news—  
*Tsar,*

*Ts.* The same,  
Is it not, that a courier brought last night  
To Pushkin?

*Sh.* (*aside*) He knows all.—I had not thought,  
Sire, that these secrets could have reached you yet.

*Ts.* No matter, prince. I wish to check and sift  
This information; otherwise I shall not  
Learn the whole truth.

*Sh.* All that I know is this,  
That a Pretender has appeared in Cracow,  
And that the King and nobles are behind him.

*Ts.* (*agitated*) What are they claiming? Who is this Pretender?  
*Sh.* I know not.

*Ts.* But . . . Why is he dangerous?

*Sh.* Beyond doubt, Sire, your empire is secure.  
By kindness, care, and liberality  
You have won the hearts of all your subjects. But  
You know yourself how thoughtless is the mob,  
How treacherous, unstable, superstitious,  
Lightly seduced by every idle hope,  
Beguiled by every momentary lure,  
Deaf and indifferent to truth, and fed  
On fables. It delights in shameless daring.  
If therefore this unknown adventurer  
Once cross the Latvian frontier, he will draw  
The senseless people to him by the magic  
Of his mere name—the resurrected name  
Of Dmitri—

*Ts.* Dmitri! What? That boy?  
Dmitri! (*to FÉDOR*) Leave us, Tsarevitch.

*Sh.* (*aside*) He colours:  
There'll be a storm now.

*Feód.* Sire, will you allow me,—

*Ts.* Impossible, my son, withdraw. (FEÓD. *exit.*)  
Dmitri!

*Sh. (aside)* So he knew nothing.

*Ts.* Listen, prince; order measures instantly;  
Let Russia all along the Latvian march  
Be lined with guards; that not a single soul  
Cross, not a hare run hither out of Poland,  
And not a crow fly here from Cracow. Hence!

*Sh.* I go.

*Ts.* Stay. Is it not a fact, this news  
Is fabricated? Did you ever hear  
Of dead men rising from their mortal graves  
To question monarchs, monarchs lawfully  
Named and elected by the people's voice,  
Crowned by the most high Patriarch? Laughable,  
Is't not? Why don't you laugh then?

*Sh.* I, my lord?

*Ts.* Listen, Prince Shuisky. When I received  
The news that this boy—of this boy's demise,  
I sent you to investigate; I now  
Conjure you in the name of Christ and God,  
Upon your conscience tell me the very truth:  
Did you identify the murdered youth,  
Or was it a bogus body? Answer me.

*Sh.* I swear to you—

*Ts.* No, Shuisky, do not swear.  
But answer: was it the Tsarevitch?

*Sh.* 'Twas he.

*Ts.* Consider, prince. I promise to be kind.  
Bygone betrayals with vain banishment  
I will not punish. But if now you should  
Play double with me, by my own son's head  
I swear, a dire death-doom shall overtake you,  
Such a death-doom, the Tsar Iván himself  
Will quake with terror in the grave at it.

*Sh.* No doom I dread but your unkindness, Tsar.  
Should I with you dare play the hypocrite?  
And could I be so blindly taken in  
As not to know Dimitri? For three days  
I visited the body in the church,

Escorted by the fathers one and all.  
 Round him lay thirteen corpses of men torn  
 To pieces by the people, where decay  
 Already had perceptibly set in.  
 But the child Tsarevitch's body still  
 Was fresh and ruddy and calm, as if in sleep.  
 In his deep wound the blood was not yet clotted,  
 His features still were utterly unchanged.  
 Nay, Sire, there is no doubt at all, Dimitri  
 Sleeps in his grave.

Ts.

Enough, withdraw. (*Exit Shuisky.*)  
 Air! Air!

I stifle—let me breathe! I felt  
 All my blood rush into my face, and sink  
 Heavily back. . . . This, this is why I have dreamt  
 Thirteen years nightly of the murdered boy,  
 Yes, yes,—so comes it—now I understand.  
 But what then is he, this my threatening foe?  
 What's he to me? An empty name, a shadow—  
 And can a shadow snatch the purple from me,  
 Or a voice seize my children's heritage?  
 Fool that I am! Of what am I afraid?  
 Breathe on this phantom—and it vanishes.  
 So, I'm resolved: never a sign of fear—  
 O heavy art thou, crown of Muscovy! <sup>1</sup>

And then the scene shifts to the Pretender's new court at Cracow. The Poles who surround him, ardent and facile, volcanic and volatile, are drawn with caustic irony by the Russian, a master of reticence. The false Dmitri plays his part like a born diplomat and a finished courtier; winning the priests by a promise to bring the Eastern Church under the papacy, the king by the prospect of an advantageous league with Muscovy, and the brilliant ambitious beauty, Marina, by the promise of the Tsaritsa's throne.

We seem here to be on the verge of a love-episode such as Pushkin, like Alfieri, thought out of keeping

<sup>1</sup> In the original 'Monomach', an imperial title.

with tragedy, and which is foreign also to the temper of Shakespeare's Histories. In nothing is Schiller's *Wallenstein* less like Shakespeare than in the love-story of Max and Thekla.<sup>1</sup> We see Marina and her maid Rosa dressing for the ball, and they hold a very un-Shakespearian discussion, whether she shall wear the ruby brooch or the diamond bracelet. The historical Marina was a soulless coquette who gave herself to any man who offered her the hope of power.<sup>2</sup> We may measure the force of Shakespeare's example when we find Pushkin's Marina reminding us of the Portia of Brutus. But this is only a single moment in a scene of great power and beauty, a game of strategy between two persons both young, both perfectly unscrupulous, one baiting love with power, the other power with love. Marina has met the Pretender by appointment in a garden, by night, beside a fountain; but not for love. He is beginning to explain how impatiently he had waited all day for this rapturous meeting, but she cuts him short—

The hours are flying, and my time is precious—  
 I did not come to hear a lover's speeches.  
 Words are unnecessary. I believe  
 You love me; but attend: I am resolved  
 To join my fate, for better or for worse,  
 With yours; but one thing, Dmitri, I have a right  
 To ask: that you discover to me all  
 The secret hopes and purposes of your heart,  
 So that I may with confidence enter on  
 Life by your side;—not blindly, like a child,  
 Nor like your harlot, a she-slave obeying  
 Speechless the trivial orders of her lord,  
 But as your true and honourable wife,  
 The consort of the Tsar of Muscovy!

<sup>1</sup> Pushkin borrowed a trait from Richard's wooing—his offering her his sword—for a genuine form of love, Juan's courtship of Lady Anna (whose husband, like Richard, he has murdered), in the *Stone Guest*.

<sup>2</sup> Pushkin to Rayevski, 1829; see App. [2].

In vain the Pretender begs her, for one hour only, to forget politics and think of him as the lover. He even declares that Muscovy and its throne are nothing to him beside her love. She indignantly stops him, with the plain assurance that she is giving her hand not to the young lover infatuated with her beauty, but to the heir of Russia, miraculously preserved by fate. He audaciously puts the case, suppose he were not Dmitri after all? Could she love him? And then he tells her the truth, that Dmitri the Tsarevitch is dead, and he himself just a poor runaway monk. She is overcome for a moment; but then proceeds to reproach him for giving up to her his well-kept secret. She will not betray him; his sham rank is as powerful as ever so long as it is believed in, and above all, it can strike down Boris, and seat him on the Russian throne, and her beside him. Let him, true or false, destroy Boris, and she will have him, but on no other condition. And she leaves him.

'No,' he reflects;—

'Tis easier to get even with Godunóv  
Or with a cunning Jesuit of the court,  
Than with a woman. . . .

A snake! a snake! 'twas not for nought I trembled;  
Another moment, and I was undone.  
But now the die is cast: I march to-morrow.

So he crosses the frontier with all his forces; the people flock to his banner, as they flock to join Bolingbroke in *Richard II*; reports of his success come into Moscow, and Boris hastily summons his council.

Camp scenes follow, with rough soldier-types;—a Russian prisoner plain-spoken to his captors, as the Boy at Agincourt to his prisoners (each poet giving his own countryman the best of the encounter), and an eccentric captain, like Fluellen, venting scraps of foreign tongues. Then we return to Moscow. In a prose scene we hear the people, now frank and bold; and an 'Idiot', like one of

Shakespeare's Fools, hustled by the crowd, voices the deadly truth to Boris : 'The lads are killing me. Order them to be killed, as you killed the little Tsarevitch.' This 'Fool' is not, like Shakespeare's, a wit kept for the amusement and profit of courts, but a poor outcast, one of the class of wandering 'Idiots', religious ascetics who wore iron caps and chains, and whose reputed 'idiocy' gave them a privilege of free speech no less serviceable for the dramatist than the chartered licence of the English court-Fools. Yet no one, but for Shakespeare's Fools, would have thought of putting a Russian 'idiot' on the tragic stage.

And now the Pretender's forces are closing in, aided by the nobles and by the people. Boris in his palace is attacked and brought in dying. He summons his son, Feódor, and addresses to him, as Henry to Hal, a last speech of counsel. 'I am Tsar still,' he cries, like Antony at bay after Actium. The Nobles declare for the Pretender, and secure their heads by the fervour of their appeal to the people to make an end of Boris and his family. In the final scene his young son and daughter are seen under guard ; a beggar asks alms of the boy. 'Go,' replies Feódor, 'you are happier than I, you are free !' In a little while they are dead, not without pitying protests from among the people, and the curtain falls on a loud summons to cry 'long live Dmitri Ivanovitch'. The people receive it in silence, a significant sign that if the tragedy of Boris is ended, another drama, of no less sinister auspice, is about to begin.

That silence, observes Bjelinski, is worthy of Shakespeare: 'it is the tragic voice of a new Nemesis pronouncing judgement upon a new victim—the destroyers of the race of Godunóv.'<sup>1</sup> For the doom of Boris is inflicted upon him by another usurper, whose claim to the Tsardom is as hollow as his own, and who has won it by the help of men as double-faced as himself.

<sup>1</sup> *u.s.*, p. 875.

Yet intercourse with Shakespeare seems to have communicated to this young Russian poet something of the indefinable faith in goodness, and in the final prevalence of good, which emanates somehow from the most harrowing of Shakespeare's tragedies, as it does not always from the grimmer darkness of Ibsen's, and as it does not from this. In the overwhelming pathos of the death of Desdemona and of Cordelia, we yet must think the world not without hope in which beings of such heavenly beauty can be born. Nor does Shakespeare even show us man in the grip of a heritage ruthless and irresistible as fate, as Ibsen does in *Ghosts*. Pushkin was still unripe, and his tragedy ends without any complete expression either of nobility of character or of the ethical background of tragedy. Yet there are, as I said, signs that he felt Shakespeare's indefinable faith in goodness.

The so-called 'December' conspiracy in which Pushkin escaped being implicated only, as he bravely told Nicholas, because he was not then in St. Petersburg, was discovered, and its leaders, some of the most eminent men in Russia, arrested. Their fate was still hanging in the balance when Pushkin wrote to a friend (in January 1826): 'I await impatiently the verdict upon these unhappy men. . . . I have definite trust in the generosity of the young Tsar. We will not be superstitious nor yet one-sided, like the French tragic poets, but watch the tragedy with the eyes of Shakespeare.'<sup>1</sup> Unhappily, trust in the generosity of the Emperor Nicholas was then and always in the highest degree misplaced; and almost a century was to elapse before the old régime, in the person of another Nicholas, was finally dismissed by the Russian people.

\* \* \* \* \*

*We will not be superstitious, nor yet one-sided, but watch the tragedy with the eyes of Shakespeare.* I do not think

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Baron Delwig.

I can find a fitter text than this fine utterance of our Russian Shakespearian's generous hope and faith, for the few sentences in which I wish to speak of him whom we commemorate to-day.

After his appointment here I only twice or thrice met Arthur Skemp, once on the occasion when he received an honorary degree from his old University. But I followed his career at a distance, and I knew how great an impression his teaching and his magnetic personality had made upon academic and popular audiences alike. He sent me also much of his verse; in particular, his Arthurian drama, vibrating with passion and poetry. And then came the sudden heroic and tragic end, which stirred grief and sympathy in circles far wider than had ever known him; while those who did know and love him, best knew how far his great powers were from being completely unfolded, and how much of what he had to say was still unsaid. And yet Arthur Skemp had time to show what he was, and to leave, in the community where he lived and laboured, as in the home where he loved and was loved, an ineffaceable memory behind. The memory of one who, in his life and in his death, brought vividly back to us, as few men do, the ideal of chivalry;—the chivalry evolved by generations of knighthood in feudal service for the crown, or the cross, or a lady's grace, but in this modern knight divested of all that is merely archaic or medieval, and re-clad in the radiant garb of those who fight not for a class only but for humanity;—the chivalry of Hamlet, who was scholar, soldier, and courtier at once, equally equipped with eye, tongue, and sword;—a Hamlet whose mind was a belfry of sweet sounds, not jangled, but full of heartening solace for all who heard. Or, if I may be allowed to resort once more to our literature in describing a great teacher of it, I would say that it was the chivalry of one in whom the temper of Chaucer's knight,—with his passion for 'truth and honour, fre-

dom and courtesye', and his port 'as meek as is a maid', was enriched with the intellectual passion of his 'Clerk', who would 'gladly lerne and gladly teche'; and also, for surely the spirit of eternal youth was in him, the young ardour of that Squier, singer and poet and lover, who left his story half untold. If Skemp, both as man and poet, had but half told his story, Milton, we know, in his meditative hour, preferred the Squier's unfinished story before all the rest. Will it not cheer the meditation and quicken the idealism of many, who without Milton's genius do battle no less strenuously than he for the things of the spirit, to remember the half-told story of Arthur Skemp?

## APPENDIX

### PUSHKIN'S LETTER TO RAYEVSKI

The salient points of this important letter, so far as bearing on the technique and intentions of *Boris Godunov*, are extracted below. The numbers are referred to in the text.

Peterb. 30 Jan. '29.

[1] Following Shakespeare's example, I have limited myself to the representation of an age and of the historical persons, not pursuing theatrical or romantic effects. The style is mixed. It is low and gross where I had to introduce gross and vulgar persons.

[2] I dreamed with satisfaction of a tragedy without love; but besides that love was an essential element in the romantic and passionate characters of my adventurer. I make Dmitri fall in love with Marina, the better to express her own passionate character. In Karamzin she is only sketched. She was simply the most passionate of all good-looking women. But she had only one passion, the passion for power, and that to a degree of violence hard to imagine. . . .

She appears only in a single scene, but I shall return to her if God gives me life.

[3] *Gavrilo Pushkin* is one of my ancestors; I have represented him as I found him in history and in my family papers. He possessed many talents, being at once an accomplished soldier, a courtier, and above all a master of plotting. He and Pleshcheev secured the success of the Pretender by their unheard-of audacity.

I find him later among the defenders of Moscow in 1612, then in 1616 in the Duma, . . . then Vervode in Nizhni, then among the deputies who crowned Romanov. He was everything, even an incendiary, as a paper shows which I found in the 'Burnt out City'. . . .

[4] *Shuisky*. I also propose to return to Shuisky. He represents in history a strange mixture of boldness, cunning, and strong character. A servant of Godunov, he alone among the chief courtiers passed over to the side of Dmitri, he is the first to conspire, and observe, he is the first to profit by the mêlée, calling out and accusing, and turning from a commander to a ruffian. He came near to execution, but Dmitri pardons him on the scaffold, banishes him, and with that light-hearted magnanimity which distinguished this amiable adventurer, again recalls him to his court, and loads him with honours and gifts. And what does Shuisky do, the man who had been on the point of falling on the block and under the axe? He makes haste to conspire again, succeeds, comes into favour, falls,—and in his fall shows more character and spiritual force than in all the rest of his life.

[5] *Dmitri*. Dmitri strongly recalls Henry IV [of France]. He is valiant, magnanimous, and boastful, like him; indifferent to religion; both for political reasons change their faith; both love amusements and war; both are inclined to chimerical enterprises, and both seek their end by conspiracy. But Henry had not Ksenia on his conscience—it is true that this dreadful charge has not yet been proved, and I hold it my sacred duty not to believe it.

[6] *On Tragedy*. While composing my *Godunov* I reflected on tragedy, and if I thought of writing a preface there would be a sensation,—this perhaps the least investigated kind of literature. They try to deduce its laws from probability, but that is excluded by the nature of drama; not to speak of time and place, &c., what probability in the devil's name can there be in a hall divided into two halves, one of which contains 2,000 people, who suppose themselves unseen by the persons on the stage. . . .

The tragic poets of real genius never troubled themselves about any other probability than that of characters and situation. See how bravely Corneille managed in the *Cid*: ah, you want the law of 24 hours! Your pardon! Instead he tosses his events about over 4 months. But nothing is more ridiculous than petty corrections in received laws. Alfieri feels deeply the ridiculous significance of the *aside*; he suppresses it, but in its place exalts the *monologue*. What childishness!

## THE CULTURE OF BOLSHEVIST RUSSIA

### I

THE obstacles to a just understanding of present-day Russia are extraordinarily great. Uncontested facts suffice, in the eyes of many not unjust-minded people, to damn the Bolshevik polity beyond appeal. And though it does not lack enthusiastic defenders, their defence has often been both too indiscriminate and too largely based upon features which, in the view of most Englishmen, themselves stand in need of apology. Those who 'see red' are not at all points colour blind. But nowhere is Burke's never-to-be-forgotten aphorism, that there is no way of drawing up an indictment against a whole nation, so apposite as here. In Bolshevik Russia we are confronted with a political organism so complex, so vast, and so fundamentally new, that no simple judgement upon it can possibly be adequate. Least of all must we indulge our English turn for compromise and moderation, by agreeing to believe in a 'pink' Russia, with a shady past perhaps, but good enough to trade with. In Russia nothing is moderate. The truth lies not between the extremes, but *in* them. The present article is based upon the view that, without minimizing in any degree either the past cruelties of the Soviet Government, the crudity of its economic creed, its abnegation of Christianity, its restrictions upon free speech or its menace to established society and to the British Empire, we must yet recognize in it a power engaged in making a contribution, of which Western Europe scarcely as yet suspects the scale or the scope, to the civilization of the world. The writer's title to speak upon the subject is limited by one grave disability. Precluded by years from visiting post-

war Russia, he claims only to have used a mass of first-hand material, German and Russian, which appears to be almost unknown in England; most of it derived from the reports of highly-trained specialist observers, jurists, archaeologists, professors, engineers, in the two countries. Such evidence has to be reckoned with; it cannot by the most sceptical be simply dismissed.<sup>1</sup>

That men, nations, and even revolutions, must be judged as wholes is the merest commonplace. Many current judgements of the Soviet polity are founded on an incomplete view either of Bolshevik activities, or of the Bolshevik mind, or of both. To most of us Russia is Moscow—a Moscow exclusively occupied in fomenting communism in ‘capitalist’ Europe. If we think of her in Asia at all it is as the insolent intruder stretching out nefarious tentacles to annoy us in India and China. But these pursuits account for only a small fraction of those which engage the vast and complex Russian state to-day. Let it be remembered that this state covers an area of some seven million square miles, one-seventh of the total land surface of the globe; and that this vast

<sup>1</sup> The sources chiefly in question are (1) the monthly review *Das Neue Russland* (Erich Baron: Berlin), founded in 1924 by Die Gesellschaft der Freunde des Neuen Russland (referred to below as *N.R.*); (2) the Weekly News Bulletin of the U.S.S.R. for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (referred to as *Bull.*). This periodical, issued every Friday from Moscow, and obtainable for a small subscription from the S.C.R., 23 Tavistock Square, W.C. 1, must be read with the caveat that it contains only what Moscow wishes ‘cultured’ Europe to know. But taking it at that and allowing for many shadows ignored, we do not think that any serious student will lightly set aside this dry, matter-of-fact record of the cultural achievements of Bolshevism. Professor Karlgren, of Copenhagen, author of a recent book on Bolshevik Russia, is chiefly engaged in collecting and emphasizing these shadows. It is the work of an able observer, but it rests essentially upon evidence compiled during a residence in 1924, when the country was still struggling with the heritage of the Great War, the civil war, and the foreign invasions. The evidence presented in this article reflects almost entirely the immensely improved conditions of 1925–7.

territory is occupied by about sixty distinct peoples in every stage of civilization and barbarism, down to little tribes among the swamps of Mid-Siberia, still in the nomad stage of pre-historic Europe. However deeply and justly we may resent those applications of Bolshevik policy which tend to disturb the cohesion or accentuate the unrest of our social order, we ought not to be blind to the constructive and creative aspects of the same policy, to the campaign, on a far vaster scale, in which the same government is attempting nothing less than to bring the whole complex of its enormous territory within the pale of civilized life. In the former group of activities Bolshevism appears as a subversive or anarchic force, directly hostile to the ideas which shape the policy of the British State. In the latter it appears as a formative and upbuilding power, pursuing a policy entirely parallel with that of the British Empire while completely independent of it.

Such a description of the range of Bolshevik activities will only seem paradoxical if we allow ourselves to fall into the second error, that of taking a too partial view of the Bolshevik 'mind'. We are interpreting this Janus-faced republic by one of its faces only, the one which happens to be turned, often enough in menace or defiance, towards ourselves, and ignoring the other, perhaps more vitally expressive, which is less in evidence. Rome was behind both the Janus-faces, and spoke through both.

In the Anglo-Saxon world, at least, the economic aspect of Bolshevism now dominates every other. The burning questions relate to trade with her, to statistics of exports and imports, to the payment of past debts and the prospect of future loans. It is natural and excusable in such circumstances that even people little touched by 'the sickness of an acquisitive society' should judge Russian Communism, whether for praise or abuse, almost solely on its economic side—as a revolutionary

plan for the systematic re-distribution of property. Such re-distributions may be just or unjust ; they derive their significance from the ideas which inspire and dictate them. And the Bolshevik re-distribution, crude in conception and cruel in execution as it undoubtedly was, owed its driving power not to proletarian cupidity but to two ideas of immense scope which have deeply embedded themselves in the social thinking of nineteenth-century Europe—work as the source of wealth, and the solidarity of the workers. Karl Marx, the intellectual father of Bolshevism, is often remembered among us only for the fallacious doctrine of ‘surplus value’ which he adopted from Ricardo. His real and lasting importance, as the Master of Balliol, in an illuminating little book,<sup>1</sup> has lately insisted, lay in his profound grasp of the truth that wealth is created by society. He brought together the analysis of wealth effected by the earlier English economists and the profounder evolutionary conception of society which he learnt from Hegel. But his analysis, like theirs, was at fault, though in exactly the opposite direction. He over-stressed the share of labour, as they the share of capital. The surplus-value doctrine, however, remained embedded in his system, and he never ceased to proclaim it ; but the living core of his teaching is, in the Master of Balliol’s words, that he ‘transformed a demand for economic justice into a demand for a just organization of society,’—in other words for a society so constituted that in it justice would, in virtue of its very structure, be done. Such a society would be one pervaded by complete solidarity among the members, perfectly organized but fundamentally democratic, and in which class war would be eliminated because there would no longer be any classes. It was the grave error of Bolshevism, and of its master-mind, Lenin, to have taken over the fallacious as well

<sup>1</sup> *Karl Marx’s Capital.* An introductory Essay. By A. D. Lindsay. (Oxford University Press.)

as the profound teaching of Marx. Lenin himself, the most plastic as well as the most daring of the Bolshevik leaders, partially corrected this error when he introduced the so-called 'New Economic Policy (NEP)', in 1921. But those who scoff at this as a recantation usually ignore that the most socially significant and far-reaching feature of the Bolshevik polity, its 'solidarity', was not in the least touched by the change. Let us glance at some of the ways in which its ideal of solidarity has actually taken shape. And first, since it is one of the least disputable and also one of the least familiar, its handling of a problem which some of the most civilized nations of the West have solved in a fashion so little creditable to their civilization,—the government of subject nationalities and alien races.

## II

A distinguished German jurist, Professor Karl Korsch, of Jena, in the course of a detailed analysis of the constitution of the 'new Russian Federal State', has declared it to stand alone in its combination of two apparently opposite features,—extreme rigidity in the central organization and the utmost looseness in the nexus of the component members.<sup>1</sup> This original feature is a fruitful source of foreign misunderstanding. It is, however, merely a translation into political terms of the Marxian economic postulate,—industry at once centrally organized and democratically owned and enjoyed. In its mode of combining these apparently opposite features the Bolshevik State departs from all known precedent. The central government has, in certain points, more complete control over the component republics than we find in any other Federal polity—more than the Federal Government at Washington, for in-

<sup>1</sup> *Das Wesen des neuen russ. Föderativstaates, N.R., ii. 5, 30 f.*  
(1925).

stance, exercises over the State governments of Utah or New York. On the other hand, the component republics enjoy some astonishing liberties, unknown elsewhere. They are free, for instance, to secede from the Union. What they are not free to do is to restrict, for their national minorities, the equal treatment they receive themselves.

Take, first, the case of the new Soviet republics established within the bounds of European Russia. Under the Tsardom the Ukraine (with a population of about twenty-five million), White Russia (about four million), as well as the Poles, Finns, Estonians, and all other non-Russian peoples, were, as far as rigid laws and ruthless administration could effect it, denationalized. The language of the Ukraine, a variety of Russian, was prohibited in print, and its flourishing literature driven underground. Nicholas Gogol, one of its most illustrious sons, wrote in Russian; another, brought up in Poland, became our Joseph Conrad. Under the Bolshevik Government the Ukraine and White Russia both form Socialist Republics, within the Union, but distinct from the great Russian Federation of Republics (*R.S.F.S.R.*), which comprises about two-thirds of the population, and nine-tenths of the territory, of the entire realm. No part of the country suffered more severely from civil war and foreign invasion than the Ukraine. But the latent forces of its national life recovered with singular rapidity when the iron pressure was withdrawn. In art, for instance, and the case of literature and music was parallel, the little group of Ukraine painters who had kept alive the germs of peasant sensibility and technique in spite of the repressive authority of the Petersburg Royal Academy, immediately began to cultivate systematically the fruitful native soil. In the very first days of the October Revolution they opened at Kieff an All-Ukrainian Academy of Arts. Even during the stress of the civil war, in

1921-2, a group of enthusiasts established the Ceramic Technicum, devoted to the cultivation of the native art of pottery. In December last the first exhibition of All-Ukrainian art was held at Kieff; in the course of the present year it will be sent to Moscow, Paris, and Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

The twenty-five millions of the Ukraine include about five millions of other nationalities, Poles, Germans, Jews. It might have been expected that the favour of this newly liberated nationalism would show itself in suppression or attenuation of the rights of these 'national minorities', particularly in view of the continued oppression of the Russian minority in Poland. On the contrary, the government of this Soviet Republic of the Ukraine has done its utmost to give each of them the same relative local autonomy that it itself enjoys. There are now in the country about 600 'national Soviets', or administrative units. Education for the minorities in their own languages and by their own teachers—relentlessly refused or grudgingly conceded by Chekoslovakia and Italy, to their German-speaking subjects,<sup>2</sup>—is an undisputed right in this Bolshevik State: there are 400 Jewish schools, 600 German, 180 Polish, besides 1,000 reading-rooms, libraries, and professional schools for their special use. Nor is this in any way peculiar to the Ukraine. In the White Russian Republic, with a minority of 15 per cent. Ukrainians and Great Russians, all the languages enjoy similarly equal right.<sup>3</sup> The White Russian Republic has also been the first actively to assist its Jewish population

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the valuable article by Professor Taran, Kieff, 'Die Kunst in der Sowjetukraine' (*N. R.*, iii. 11, 35 f.). It is illustrated with many examples of Ukrainian art. Also *Bull.* No. 28, 7 January 1926.

<sup>2</sup> On the Italian policy in this matter see *The Case of South Tyrol against Italy*, translated and edited by the present writer (Allen and Unwin, 1927).

<sup>3</sup> Chelpapow, Moscow: 'Sowjetweissrussland' (*N. R.* iii. 11, 17 f.).

(11 per cent. of the whole) by settling them on the land from which they were, under Tsardom, legally debarred.<sup>1</sup> The old anti-Jewish pogroms are now unknown. The Germans, of whom there are about a million in Russia, besides enjoying these minority rights in the various republics, have an 'autonomous republic' of their own, on the lower Volga, where their ancestors settled on the invitation of Catherine II.<sup>2</sup> In the same spirit, training is provided for the minority teachers at the greater universities, especially Moscow and Kazan.<sup>3</sup> And the education of the Russian Finns, once so rigorously treated, is now supervised by a Finnish institute at Leningrad itself.<sup>4</sup>

In the republics of Asiatic Russia, while the political method is the same, the cultural problems were widely different. In Armenia and Aserbeidjan (N. Persia) ancient civilizations had been laid waste. English friends of Armenia, if not convinced *a priori* that a Bolshevik report is necessarily faked, may be referred to the detailed narrative given by M. Lunacharsky, Commissar of Culture, a poet, and one of the frankest critics of his own educational achievements, of his visit to Armenia in September 1925.<sup>5</sup> Heaps of stone still represent the homes of the massacred peasants. But the towns teem with orphan children, to whose rescue had

<sup>1</sup> *Bull.* No. 28, 7 January 1926.

<sup>2</sup> On cultural institutions in White Russia. Cf. *Bull.*, 10 September 1926.

<sup>3</sup> *N. R.* iii. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> On the whole subject see the valuable paper by Dr. Dobranitzki (Hamburg): *Das Nationalitätsproblem in der Sowjetunion* (*N. R.* iii. 3, 16 f.).

<sup>5</sup> *N. R.* ii. 1, 37 f. Lunacharsky also describes the great irrigation works being carried out in Armenia by Russian engineers, cf. also ii. 9. In his recent book, *Bolshevist Russia*, Professor Karlgren makes great play with M. Lunacharsky's unreserved admissions. The Russian statesman is the more to be credited when, as here, he expresses cordial satisfaction.

come not only the Russian school but the Russian institution of 'pioneers' (boy scouts). At Eriwan, the capital, the population crowded to hear the Russian visitor, and a thousand children performed their pioneers' gymnastic exercises before him with a combined fire and precision which he had never seen surpassed.<sup>1</sup>

Completely different again was the cultural problem presented by the vast regions of Northern and Central Asia, where there had never been a civilization at all, and where vast populations were doubly 'analphabetic', since they not only, like the illiterate masses of Italy or Spain, could not use the alphabet, but had not an alphabet to use. Such conditions did not disturb the Tsardom. Like most autocracies it preferred an ignorant population. The Soviet Government was completely free from this obscurantism. Holding a form of faith which it believed to be irrefutable, ignorance was its enemy and enlightenment its ally. And its larger minds had still better reasons for their liberality. 'We perfectly understand', said Lunacharsky, 'that the ideal of true democracy can only be reached by a cultural uplifting of the entire people.'<sup>2</sup> As a first step it formed the colossal project of stamping out illiteracy throughout the enormous realm. It is easy for the Western critic to scoff at the assurance with which Lepin, who first formulated the scheme, named 1928 as the date when the last analphabetic child in the pathless wilds of Tungus and Yakut would have learnt to read. But however extravagant in its hopes, the campaign against illiteracy is seriously meant and strenuously pursued. For several tribes, as already stated, an alphabet had first to be provided. Last year, for instance, Tungus received its first ABC *Reading book*, with Russian letters

<sup>1</sup> For details of the repatriation of Armenian refugees, as well as of the preservation of ancient Armenian monuments, cf. *Bull.* No. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Neue Russland*, ii. 9, 2.

to convey its as yet unwritten sounds.<sup>1</sup> We hear, again, of the building of a school for the most diminutive people in the empire (population, 405) in the depths of Siberia, and of another in a remote village, cut off from the world for nine months in the year, where no one but the village elder could read, and where only after long delay a school-mistress could be found to settle.<sup>2</sup>

No one will expect an early harvest from the seed thus laboriously scattered in the wilds. But no observer of the Bolshevik system who quickens criticism with imagination will refuse a tribute to the heroic greatness and daring of its civilizing plans, or to the will power which is shaping their still confessedly embryonic realization.

### III

And something of both these qualities must be allowed to the Bolshevik scheme of education itself above these elementary levels. The peremptory and audacious negations of Bolshevik culture are better known than its significant and sometimes original affirmations. And the scope even of its negations is exaggerated. Thus it is not true that Bolshevism, like most polities founded upon revolution, turned its back upon the past, or that it ignored all history which does not tend to prove a Communist proposition. It had proletarian extremists who were for obliterating all the monuments of the national past prior to 1917. But this was a perversion of the deeper strain in Bolshevik thought itself, which, as we saw, derived from the evolutionary view of society implicit in Hegel and Marx; and it was not the policy of the larger minds, nor that which prevailed. The exemplary preservation of the art treasures in the museums

<sup>1</sup> *Bull.* No. 28. There was nothing chauvinistic in the choice of the Russian alphabet. In the republic of Azerbeidjan the Latin letters are to replace the Arabic script.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Dobranitzki, *u.s.*

of Moscow and Leningrad, to which Sir Martin Conway and others have testified, is not a diplomatic bid for the approval of Europe, but an example of the same policy which is encouraging the study and preservation of the artistic monuments of old Russia<sup>1</sup> and the exploration of ruined cities of vanished civilizations.<sup>2</sup> Societies for research in ethnology have been founded since the Revolution in several universities. The university of Leningrad has, since 1925, a department for comparative ethnography and lexicography. Several specialist reviews devoted to historical research are published in Moscow and Leningrad, some of them, like the *Istorik Marxist* ('The Marxist Historian'), recalling in their very titles that Marxism stands for a new conception of history, not for a repudiation of it. Medieval studies, including the study of medieval England, have their chief centre in Moscow, classical and modern in Leningrad. Even the religious faiths, proscribed in the schools, contemptuously tolerated in the churches, may acquire a halo of interest as historical phenomena. Thus the society for the study of Siberian ethnography has organized expeditions to the Altai mountains, collecting, besides folk-lore and songs, the religious hymns of the once persecuted 'Old Believers'. In some cases Bolshevism merely encouraged a tradition already vigorous; the English medievalists of Moscow are mostly pupils of Sir Paul Vinogradoff, once professor there, and far from being a Bolshevik. But it is impossible to mistake the dynamic force of the Bolshevik cultural idea. For it has repeatedly happened that the demand for research into the history of a district came from the inhabitants themselves. Thus the Republic of Yakut

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Professor Winkler (Königsberg), *Von Denkmälern altrussischer Kunst und ihrer Erhaltung* (N. R. ii. 1, 23), an account of his tour of inspection.

<sup>2</sup> Bull. for 15 October 1926 describes the discovery of old Byzantine towns in the Crimea.

(North Siberia) made this request for their vast domain, a three months' journey from Leningrad; and in August 1926, delegates from the minute Republic of Tannatutwin arrived at the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad entreating that scholars might be sent to investigate the historical development of this little people,—and also, incidentally, to provide it with an alphabet!<sup>1</sup> And the school study of history, especially in the Asiatic districts, habitually begins with a study of the locality. This procedure is now so orthodox in education that one can understand the enthusiastic remark of a visitor (who had possibly not observed that school history often also ended there) to the effect that 'classical pedagogy was at length realized in Bolshevik Russia'.

#### IV

And it is not only the study of history which begins, and often ends, with 'the locality'. The same formula, more largely applied, holds for the more directly creative cultural activities of Bolshevik Russia, in literature, music, and art. No one who remembers how many new beginnings in literature have been inspired by the cry 'Back to the soil!' or 'Turn away from convention and tradition and make poetry of actual deeds and living speech', will contend that the new Russia's insistent and enthusiastic preoccupation in its art, with its own life and its own ideas, is of altogether evil omen. The art of the young writers of the new Russia is rude and unripe enough, but they are in living touch with the life they are clumsily reproducing in play and poem; an advantage for want of which the creative powers of the much more accomplished writers who are living in exile, according to the frank testimony of one of them,

<sup>1</sup> See the valuable account of his 'Forschungen über Land u. Meer', by Professor Fersmann, Vice-president of the Academy of Sciences (*N. R.* iii. 11, 29 f.).

Prince Mirsky, are falling into decay. Nor must the prevailing preoccupation with the life of the new Russia be understood as excluding recognition of other literature. The repertory of the twenty-eight theatres of Moscow in the first years of the Revolution was as rich and varied as any to be found in Europe. The *Prometheus*, the *Oresteia*, and *Oedipus the King*<sup>1</sup> were not too remote or too academic to be put on the Bolshevik stage. The Kammer theatre of Moscow, founded in 1914, pursued pre-revolutionary aims and ideas; but it was fully recognized and supported by the Bolshevik government. In the person of its Commissar of Culture, M. Lunacharsky, that government emphatically insisted that creative literature must be evolved in continuity with the past; that the repudiation of existing tradition, demanded by proletarian extremists in this sphere also, as in the teaching of history, led nowhere.<sup>2</sup> It was barren, like the parallel nihilism of the Futurists. Nor were these merely the private opinions of an enlightened official, such as might be broached by an English Prime Minister at an Academy dinner. 'The Bolshevik revolution introduced a new spirit into the relation of the state to art,' said the director of the Imperial Institute for the History of Art, at Leningrad, Theodor Schmidt, in 1926.<sup>3</sup> 'Art, being the product of society, is a concern of the state, not an affair of private cultivation.' Schmidt was referring to art in the narrower sense; but his statement was equally true of literature and especially of the stage. In the early years of the Revolution this concern took the form of making the theatre a democratic institution, with very low prices; and it was thronged even in the worst days of the civil war, by an ill-dressed but festive and critical audience of workers. But since 1924 a much more intimate bond has grown

<sup>1</sup> In January 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Lunacharsky, 'The Principles of Russian art-policy' (*N. R.* ii. 5).

<sup>3</sup> *N. R.* iii. 1, 35. Schmidt was appointed in 1924.

up between Bolshevik society and dramatic art than state patronage, however liberal and popular, can possibly achieve. In an extremely illuminating article on the theatrical activities of present-day Russia, the head of the department for theatrical science in the Leningrad Institute for Art History distinguishes those activities into two groups, which he clearly holds to be of comparable importance.<sup>1</sup> The first is the professional group, run and directed as elsewhere, by trained actors, and culminating in the twenty-eight public and twelve private theatres of Moscow, with the world-famous Meyerhold theatre at their head. The second, or 'self-worked theatre', which has its focus at Leningrad, where the professional theatre gives only occasional performances, consists of the countless 'workers' clubs',—150 in Leningrad alone,—where actors, audience, and play alike are provided by the workers themselves. There is here no question of a classical repertory, or of the problem play for 'intellectuals'; neither is there any concern for the refinements of abnormal psychology. The rest of drama is of the more elemental but real and fruitful kind which comes when men are simply giving dramatic form to their own daily life and experience. In the spring of 1925 the city of Leningrad offered a prize for the best play and performance, to be competed for by all the workers' clubs. The common prescribed subject was 'the May festival'. Each club, each factory, had its own way of handling the theme. After a preliminary trial of strength in the several districts, the victorious clubs performed their plays, for final decision, on the stage of the chief theatre of Leningrad. The performances lasted from dawn till late at night,—a communal art festival on a scale paralleled perhaps in the Eisteddfods of rural Wales, but scarcely known to the working masses of any other great city. The artistic and literary value of this workers' drama is still, no

<sup>1</sup> By Professor Gwosdoff (*N. R.* iii. 7, 21).

doubt, elementary enough. But it is pulsing with life. And it both draws upon and contributes to the famous and brilliant theatre of the professionals. Meyerhold's genius for producing wonderful effects with a minimum of apparatus scattered fruitful hints for the cunning use of still simpler resources which were eagerly adopted by the artisan amateurs. And the workers' theatre in its turn has been, declares the responsible and accomplished observer already here quoted, of even more value to the professional theatre; stimulating by its freshness, its immediate and direct grip upon life, and the naïve ardour of its social outlook, whatever is similarly direct and immediate in the art of the professionals, discrediting their outworn conventions, and providing a perennial harvest of new situations and ideas. From this inter-working of technical genius with the naïve realism of a keen and enterprising community, is being gradually evolved the dramatic art of the New Russia.

## V

Mr. Keynes, an uncompromising critic of the Bolshevik creed, has described the spirit which it generates as a 'religion'. If religion is measured by its 'binding' power, it is hard to reject the description. The 'solidarity' of the workers, which is the core of the Bolshevik faith, and the corresponding solidarity of the vast 'society' of republics they inhabit, live as inspiring ideals in many thousands—to put it modestly—of simple minds. Lenin bade his young Communists further their cause by each doing daily for his village or his town some bit of public work.<sup>1</sup> Only the surface of the vast mass may yet have been touched. Many millions in rural Russia are still indifferent. The old antagonism of town and country, peasant and artisan, is not extinct. But English

<sup>1</sup> Quoted as a motto to a Russian treatise on the peasant school (Shochin's *Shkola Krestjanskoi Molodezhi*).

social workers will be more likely to look with envy than with contempt at some of the Bolshevik ways of overcoming it. Among these is the so-called system of 'cultural patronage' (*chefstvo*), in which societies of city workers adopt as their 'wards', for purely cultural purposes, particular villages in the surrounding territory, organizing and running libraries, clubs, reading circles, and furnishing books and newspapers. Begun in Moscow, this system is now widely diffused among the towns of the Union. In December 1925 there were thirteen such societies in Moscow alone, with a membership of over 150,000 drawn from two-thirds of the industrial enterprises of the city.<sup>1</sup>

A final glimpse of the working of Bolshevik 'solidarity' in its far-flung school-system may produce amusement, not unmixed surely with sympathy. In the autumn of 1925 the first 'All-Union' Conference of Teachers since the Revolution met in the Opera House at Moscow. Half a million of teachers were represented by 1,600 delegates. They came from every district of the realm except the Republic of Yakut, a region as large as the United States, but 8,000 miles from Moscow, where its delegates could not arrive in time. An English correspondent had come to report the proceedings for an educational journal. He listened in impatient bewilderment, for the Education Minister's speech and the questions he was pelted with turned, not on curricula, or salaries, but on the national economy, exports, and agriculture. He was but moderately satisfied when his Russian colleagues explained to him that the modern rural teacher, teaches not from primers or text-books only but from the 'immense book of life', and not the child only, but its father as well. An elementary course of what we should call 'civics' is, in fact, imposed by the Soviet Union upon all its future citizens,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bull.* No. 27, 24 December 1925, where statistics are given of the cultural work achieved by these societies at that date.

of either sex, reached by the schools. Representatives of labour hence properly attended this educational conference to welcome the teachers. And it was a young girl teacher from a distant province who replied to their welcome : 'Listen, brother workers, thou blue-bloused framer of the future, and thou, peasant, eternal, and thou, knight of the proletarian honour, toiler on the land, red-army soldier ! To you all and to your children our welcome—our strength, our knowledge, for you, all our life !' Such scenes do not recall the congress of educationists as we know it in the west. But they suggest that the State which can breed this temper has at least a glimpse of the social basis upon which Plato and Sir Thomas More long ago laid down that true education must be built.

## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IDEALS IN THE ENGLISH POETS.<sup>1</sup>

'POETRY', said Shelley, 'is the expression of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.' 'Every man', said the great French critic Sainte-Beuve, 'has a sleeping poet in his breast.' The poets are even through their poetry akin to us, and the greatest poets are of all the most deeply akin. They waken something in us which habitually sleeps, and this something we recognize, the more surely the greater the poet, as the best in us, something which draws us by a sudden magic out of our common egoisms and our common attachments, and makes us for the time citizens of a realm which is at once real and ideal; 'the very world which we inhabit, but seen in the light of larger vision and loftier purpose. No doubt, poetry is a house with many mansions, and some of these are idyllic pleasaunces where you rather learn to forget the real world than to see it more clearly; where dreaming eyes look out from magic casements upon faery lands, and idle singers pipe at ease of an empty day. But no great poet remains permanently in these idyllic bowers. You find him sooner or later in the great hall, vividly alive to all that goes on there, to high counsel and heroic emprise, to the memorials of the great past which hang on the walls, the symbolic fire that burns on the hearth. Every country which has given birth to a great poet has a voice in which some national aspiration, or some national need, has become articulate.'

But no nation has a richer treasure of great poets who

<sup>1</sup> A Lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on 4 January 1916.

reflect, sustain, and reanimate its deeper self, than our own country.

We may distinguish three types of national ideal. In a complete and mature patriotism they will all be found ; but, in patriotism as it has commonly been, and still for the most part is, one or other falls short. There is, first, the elementary patriotism which is independent of political maturity ; which may be as vigorous in the most primitive tribe as in the most highly organized empire ; the patriotism of the warrior defending his native land, his home, his *ēdel*. But a merely militant patriotism, however heroic, obviously goes little way to constitute the whole duty of a patriotic citizen, or to embody and express his allegiance to his state. The new problems of internal structure which emerge with the growth from the tribe to the nation, may even strain that allegiance, while their successful solution places it on a surer base. The conflicts between ruler and subjects, patricians and plebeians, province and province, creed and creed, commonly attenuate national sentiment, even where they do not lead to actual disruption and secession. The nation as an effective ideal tends to become less potent than the party or the class, even when the malcontents do not withdraw to a Veii, a New England, or a real or figurative 'Aventine'. But there are patriots in every party, and idealists in every creed ; patricians and plebeians were Romans, Cavaliers and Puritans, imperialists and 'pro-Boers' were Englishmen, in their own way ; and both sides enlarged the content of the Rome or England in and for which they fought one another. Centuries of national history loud with the clash of contending parties and creeds have thus, in Europe, issued in forms of national sentiment as definite and as intense, but deeper, richer, and better grounded, than the elementary loyalty of the tribesman to his tribe could possibly be. The England of a modern Englishman's love and allegiance is not the England of

Drake and Raleigh, nor the England of Hampden and Cromwell, nor the England of Cobden and Adam Smith, nor the England of Wordsworth and Shelley, but the England in which all these ideals have somehow been integrated and reconciled. It is in vain to seek a formula which will comprehend at once all sides of this complex yet intense national personality ; it is much easier with Dr. Havelock Ellis to throw into picturesque epigram the seeming contradictions brought together in this 'most eccentric of peoples, all the world says, and the most acquisitive, made to be pirates and made to be poets, a people that have fastened their big teeth into every quarter of the globe and flung their big hearts in song at the feet of Nature, and even done both things at the same time'. But it may be not quite so difficult to find a formula for the element in our national life which has chiefly contributed to this integration. We take it to be, beyond question, the union of law with liberty and liberty with law, which England, however incompletely she has even to-day carried it out, was the first of the peoples of modern Europe to evolve.

But if liberty working through law is a chief source of our national cohesion, it also contained a solvent for an exclusive and self-regarding nationalism. The growth of international sentiment in England during the nineteenth century was certainly not a product of purely English conditions. We cannot detach it, at all points, from that proclamation of universal fraternity by revolutionary France in 1792 which carried a wave of international passion throughout Europe, and left a lasting monument in the classic treatise of Kant on 'A Permanent Peace'. But political England, for a moment carried away by the fervour of that 'young dawn', soon became its deadliest opponent, and it was not in the name of revolutionary 'fraternity', but of liberty as England knew it, that she led the resistance to the war of universal conquest into which the war of universal

liberations had swiftly degenerated. And while the gospel of the French Revolution continued to reverberate in individual minds sensitive to its appeal, the political internationalism which slowly struggled for recognition and authority during the subsequent course of the century, was less a reflection of that gospel than an instinctive corollary from English political experience, a demand for the extension to other peoples of the constitutional liberty become axiomatic for ourselves. Condorcet, on the very morrow of that first proclamation, had declared that a good law was good for all, just as a true proposition was true for all. The English mind seldom operates with this swiftness of logic ; but it is unwilling finally to tolerate what it recognizes to be unjust ; and if the impassioned cosmopolitanism which effaces national boundaries in the name of universal Humanity has never struck root in England, she may claim to have taken some steps towards the true internationalism which is not the antithesis of nationalism, but its completion and its crown.

What, then, has been the part of the English poets in relation to these three types of national ideal ?

## I

The elementary type of patriotism finds expression chiefly in the field. War, like love, touches man where he is greatest and where he is least ; the fire and the clay in him, the hero and the brute. It is the glory of poetry that in its handling of this familiar matter, it helps to liberate us from the obsession of the brute and the clay, and make us one with the hero and the flame. The practical citizen in us all measures men and actions by their success ; but what, even more in England than elsewhere, has evoked poetry is neither success nor failure, but heroism, and heroic failure has often had a more potent appeal than heroic success. When Browning

tells us that ‘achievement lacks a gracious somewhat’; or when Wordsworth declares that action is a temporary and limited thing, ‘the motion of a muscle this way or that,’ while suffering ‘opens gracious avenues to infinity’; or when Rupert Brooke declares that in the peril of death lies the supreme safety—we thrill with an involuntary assent which, in spite of the protests of our cool reason, obstinately persists. And the poets themselves involuntarily confirm this view by the poetic sterility of sheer triumph. The paean is a poor creature compared with tragedy. Even Pindar’s songs of triumph for the winners of chariot races are themselves a kind of triumph over reluctant material. The noblest battle-poetry in Old English is the story, nearly a thousand years old, of one of the rare occasions on which Englishmen have been overpowered by an invading army on their own soil. All fall save two; but their leader before the fight has flung his heroic defiance at the Danish pirates: ‘Tell your lord, that here stands unblenching, a chieftain with his men, who mean to defend this native ground, this fatherland.’ Or compare the crude animal joy of Laurence Minot, as he hitches into rhyme the smashed limbs and burnt cities of the French or the Scots, with the glow of unquenchable faith which kindles the verse of John Barbour, a little later, as he tells the story of the homeless wanderings of Robert Bruce. In most great battle-poetry we are made to feel either the heroic stand against great odds, as in Drayton’s song of Agincourt, and Tennyson’s ‘The Revenge’; or else the pathetic sublimity of ruin, as in Shakespeare’s wonderful lines on Coriolanus:

Death, that dark sprite, in ’s nervy arm doth lie,  
Which being advanced declines, and then men die.

His *Henry V* is no doubt a dramatic song of triumph for a great national success. But it is not Henry’s success which inspires its finest poetry; the greatest moments

of the play are these in which he shows us the tragic forecast of doom based upon his father's wrong, and the personal magnetism which welded his army together as one man and, more than his generalship, accounted for the victory. Drayton had painted him truculently careless of his title to the crown :

His lion's courage stands not to inquire  
Which way old Harry came by it. . . .  
What's that to him? He hath the garland now. . . .

That is not Shakespeare's notion of heroism ; his Henry prays to God, before Agincourt, to remember his father's guilt on some other day. And his mastery of men is based not upon terror, terrible though he can be, but upon comradeship and character :

A largess universal, like the sun,  
His genial eye doth shed on every one,  
Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all,  
Behold, as may unworthiness define,  
A little touch of Harry in the night.

In that very drama of *Coriolanus* which sounds the sublimest note of Shakespeare's war poetry, the climax of greatness is reached not in those pictures of the irresistible arm, leaving death and tears in its path, but in his final surrender of his purposed vengeance upon Rome at the impassioned appeal of his mother and wife—a surrender which, he knows, will cost his life :

O mother, mother!  
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,  
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene.  
They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!  
You have won a happy victory for Rome;  
But for your son, believe it, O believe it,  
Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,  
If not most mortal to him. But, let it come.

So, if we turn to a later time, a minor poet like Camp-

bell made great heroic songs of the 'Battle of the Baltic', and the irresistible floating bulwarks of Britannia. But for the greatest war poetry of that world-crisis we have to turn to Wordsworth's sonnets. And what stirs him to poetry is not Trafalgar or Waterloo, of them he has not a word; but the colossal disasters of Jena and Austerlitz, the overthrow of Venice and of Switzerland, and the ruin of leaders of forlorn hopes, like Schill, and Palafox, and Toussaint L'Ouverture. The wonderful sonnet to this last great ruined chieftain gathers up in its last lines—some of the sublimest in English poetry—that instinctive faith, which we can neither justify nor get rid of, that heroism, even when it utterly fails, and the more when it utterly fails, does not perish, but has its part in the spiritual atmosphere in which our lives are passed and by which they are silently moulded, replenished, and inspired :

Most miserable chieftain! Yet do thou  
 Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow!  
 Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,  
 Live and take comfort! Earth and air and skies,  
 There's not a breathing of the common wind  
 That will forget thee. Thou hast great allies;  
 Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
 And Love, and Man's unconquerable mind.

## II

I turn to a more complex question. What has been the attitude of the poets to the second aspect of nationalism—that which seeks internal cohesion and unity, and has in England attained them, in great part, by a political process, her fortunate evolution of a liberty based upon law? If we approach the matter with the bias of modern Romanticism, we may well think the question futile. To Keats and Rossetti, absorbed in the passionate cult of beauty, the fortunes of the body politic

are of no concern ; to Shelley and Blake all political institutions are informed with the virus of evil, and law itself is the malignant antagonist who thwarts the divinity of impulse. Medieval romanticism too had its dream world of Arthur and Gawain, of the Cornish sea and the magical forest of Broceliande. But the wonderful coming of England, first of modern nations, into conscious and ardent nationhood in the fourteenth century carried the poets with it too, and Chaucer and Gower and Langland and the Gawain poet speak in a voice of many tones which renders articulate many of the forces which were shaping the personality of the young nation. Among the forces thus rendered articulate was not in any sense the demand for 'freedom'. The English poets have no quarrel with the political system under which they live. Their cry is rather for the laws to be better observed and more strictly enforced. In that age, in which the English parliament could already arraign its king, the stern voice of William Langland is heard arraigning England herself for her loose observance of the laws she had set up ; and the greatest scene of his *Vision of Piers Plowman* is the allegorical trial in which the chief offender is arraigned before 'Conscience' and the king. Even the cry, rarely heard, of revolt against oppressive laws takes the form of a satire upon 'Richard the Redelesse' for not intervening more effectually. Chaucer, the genial conservative, the trusted friend of queens and kings, breathes no hint even of such revolt ; his satire pillories, not the authorities who imposed a too rigorous rule, but the officials who flagrantly violated it ; and the most ideal figure among his Pilgrims is the poor Parson who simply does his duty. It was reserved for the Scot, John Barbour, in his *Brus*, to raise the first hymn to 'Freedom' as he records the English aggressions upon his country. Two centuries later, the implicit but rarely vocal awareness of England's incipient nationhood has become glowing enthusiasm

for an England exuberantly conscious of her young strength, that enthusiasm becomes lyrical on the lips of her greatest poets, and Shakespeare himself utters, with the voice of the dying Gaunt, the first and the most magnificent of English hymns to England. And homage to the woman, of cold but magnetic personality, who sat on the throne, now quickens with an accent of chivalry and romance the impersonal passion for country. But Elizabethan nationalism and Elizabethan loyalty, as expressed by the greater poets, are distinct in kind from the flag-waving patriotism of the streets and the object homage to an absolute sovereign. Spenser arrays 'Gloriana' in more dazzling poetry than his exemplar Ariosto had found for Alfonso, but his loyalty is at bottom more exacting and less subservient. Whatever measure of courtly flattery guided his pencil as he drew, he leaves us in no doubt that his ideal ruler must embody all those ethical and political virtues which the knights of his Faery realm severally champion, and be ever ready, like Arthur, to intervene on their behalf. One of these knights, Sir Artegal, is the champion of Justice. It is unfortunate for Spenser's after-fame that he found for his champion's prowess no fitter field than the ruthless government of Ireland, and 'no worthier symbol than a sword of adamant and an iron flail. His poet's imagination enables him to describe with power the crushing of resistance by 'irresistible' force, but it gives him no glimmer of insight into the genius of an alien race. None the less we have to recognize that Spenser's demand for stringent government is as little as Dante's derived from a predilection for despotism or for despots, but is rooted, like his, in a passion for Justice. He saw a world from which the goddess of Justice had taken flight, grief-stricken at the wickedness of men : nothing remained but that her champion should restore her dominion by the sword. The legal and law-abiding temper of England is eloquent in his verse,

but unfortunately he exhibits it as applied to a situation in which legality has habitually been the enemy, not the instrument, of Justice. And the modern Englishman finds himself more easily, in this as in other matters, in the neighbouring poetic world—the world at once more supremely poetic, and more profoundly real, of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's politics, it is true, no more than Spenser's, are ours ; the Civil wars and the French as well as the English Revolution lie once for all between us ; a gulf which the stoutest Tory reactionary cannot cross. Democrats—even so large and free a spirit as Whitman—may turn away from his genially contemptuous pictures of the Roman mob. But Shakespeare, Tudor poet as he was, draws arbitrary power with a yet more incisive hand. If he laughs at the Roman citizens on whose political sentiments Mark Antony plays what tune he pleases, he makes Caesar himself a provoking compound of magnificent pretensions and senile weakness. And he has transfixed with immortal words the fantastic tricks of man 'dressed in a little brief authority' which makes the angels weep. The English Histories are weighted with an almost oppressive sense of the national significance of law. Shakespeare does not show us the goddess of Justice flying with shrieks away from earth ; nor a knightly champion vindicating her with an adamantine sword. But he shows us the Titan Richard III, trampling, with easy cynical smile, the innocent lives which stand in his path ; and the tender flower, Richard II, as beautiful as the other was ungainly, overriding the liberties of England with the insolent nonchalance of boyhood. Bolingbroke is able to dethrone Richard because Richard stands for wanton misrule and he for the might of law, for the established and ordered polity of England. And it is this ordered polity of England and neither Bolingbroke nor Richard that is the hero of this play. For Bolingbroke, having dethroned Richard in

the name of law, himself violates law by sending him to death ; and thus incurs for the dynasty he founds the Nemesis which finally overwhelms the House of Lancaster in the Civil Wars. So far is Shakespeare from the worship of the strong man ; so far is he from the worship of the State—from the unqualified worship even of his own England. The strong man Bolingbroke had saved the State, but the strong man, in his posterity, goes down ; and so far from crime being, as Machiavelli taught, a method of benefiting a State, Shakespeare saw in it only a desperate hazard which might seal its doom.

But if he refuses to worship force, Shakespeare believes unflinchingly in government. Only he sees that all government succeeds best when it has the wills of the governed on its side, and his ideal for a State is that it should be what in modern language we call an organism, what in his is called a harmony—

Congreeing in a full and natural close,  
Like music.

Therefore doth heaven divide  
The state of man in divers functions,  
Setting endeavour in continual motion ;  
To which is fixed, as an aim or butt,  
Obedience : for so work the honey-bees,  
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach  
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.

*Hen. V. i. ii.*

This hive-like harmony was no doubt imperfectly realized in the Elizabethan polity. But it was sufficiently realized to deprive rebellion of the intellectual and moral significance which inspires hymns to liberty, and gives the demand for it a moving appeal. The real freedom which the Elizabethan normally enjoyed under the laws was a mainly unconscious possession equally incapable of exciting the lyric cry. Shakespeare and all his generation accordingly interpret and glorify their

'broad-based freedom' only on the side of law; and the great name of liberty is hardly heard in his pages save as the comic pretension of Roman and English plebeians, or of that half-animal rebel whom Renan chose to be the type of democracy, Caliban.

In was only under the more provocative and headstrong autocracies of the seventeenth century that liberty in England became at length an inspiring cause, and could be vindicated by an immortal voice. Yet it was not so much the greater gravity of the offence against freedom that explains the difference, when we pass from the obscure anger of the Elizabethan pamphleteers to the majestic passion of the *Areopagitica*. Milton had thought deeply upon liberty; and his thought was nourished on the wisdom of Athens and the idealism of the early Church. Liberty with him meant both the right of every man to speak his mind unchallenged—*democratic* freedom—and *spiritual* freedom, or the willing self-surrender to a higher law. The second was for Milton the ground and justification of the first. Liberty is with him always, ultimately, the liberty to obey, the release from a lower control for the sake of perfect service to a higher. And he assails with equal vigour, though with different weapons, the human laws and despoticisms which thwart the higher service and the human weakness which flags in it. That higher service and therefore the ideal of perfect liberty, in its conflict with human weakness, is the theme of his great poems. The Lady in *Comus* vindicates it; Adam and Eve transgress it; Christ regains Paradise for man by submitting to it; Samson, after his tragic failure, reasserts it by his death. In the prose works he deals rather with the impediments imposed by tyrannical laws. If he thunders against the censorship, it is that the mind of England may freely unfold its God-given powers; if he would extend the right of divorce, it is because marriage is sometimes a clog to the spiritual life. And when he

came to discharge, at the cost of his eyesight, the 'noble task' of defending English liberty before the bar of European opinion, he made very clear that he meant much more by it than merely to vindicate the right of the English people to manage its political affairs as it chose. At the close of the *Second Defence of the English People* he turns upon his fellow countrymen, as Wordsworth was to do in his war sonnets, with an outburst of impassioned eloquence, warning them that to have beaten down their enemies, and established republican government, will avail them nothing if they neglect the greater victories of peace :

*'Nam et vos, O cives . . . For your chances, either of winning or keeping liberty, will be not a little affected, fellow-citizens, by what you are yourselves. Unless your liberty is of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor destroy, unless a liberty founded only on piety, justice, temperance, have struck deep and intimate root in your hearts, there will not be wanting those who will rob you insidiously of the liberty you boast to have won in arms. War has exalted many whom peace brings low. If at the close of war you neglect the arts of peace; if war is your peace and freedom, war your sole glory and virtue, you will find, trust me, peace itself the most arduous kind of war, and what you took for your liberty, your servitude. Unless by loyal and active devotion to God and men . . . you have put away the superstitious spring of ignorance of true religion from your hearts, you will find those who will put you like cattle under the yoke. Unless you expel avarice, ambition, wantonness from your minds and from your households, the tyrant whom you thought to encounter abroad and in the field will attack you yet more fiercely at home, within; nay, rather a host of tyrants will be begotten daily, unendurably, in your very entrails. These you must first conquer, this is the warfare of peace, these are victories, arduous indeed and though bloodless more glorious by far than the bloody victories of war; and unless you are victors here also, that enemy and tyrant late in the field you will either not conquer at all or you will have conquered him in vain.'*

'For if anyone thinks that to devise ingenious means of filling the treasury, to array forces by land and sea, to deaf astutely

with foreign envoys, and make sagacious leagues and treaties, is of more value for the state than providing clean-handed justice, redressing grievances, relieving distress, securing to each his own, you will discover too late, when these great affairs have suddenly deceived you, that these small ones, as you account them, have proved your ruin. Nay, even your trust in armies and allies will betray you unless it be guarded by the authority of justice; and wealth and honours, which most men pursue, easily change their owners. They repair where virtue and industry and patient labour are most alive, and desert the slackers.

. . . . .

'Know—lest you should blame anyone but yourselves—know, that just as to be free is exactly the same thing as to be dutiful, to be wise, to be just and temperate, prudent with one's own, not laying hands on other's possessions, and thence, finally, generous and strong, so to be the opposite of these, is the same as to be a slave.'

Milton here put forward a conception of national cohesion profounder indeed than Shakespeare's, for it had been annealed in the fire of civil convulsion, but entirely consonant with it. The pillar of Shakespeare's politics is order, the pillar of Milton's liberty; Shakespeare's order, however, is not despotism but the spontaneous harmony of the hive; and Milton's liberty is not anarchy but self-discipline. Both poets approach, from opposite sides, that ideal of law and liberty, conciliated and working together, which answers to the deepest political instincts of the English mind. But Shakespeare, writing in an age of political adolescence, gives his ideal state the glorious attributes of youth, where body and soul work together scarcely conscious of possible discord; while Milton's ideal for the state is like that of the mature man who has subdued his body to be the servant of his soul. And so he anticipated Wordsworth's great declaration which Shakespeare would have less completely understood, that

By the soul.

Only, the nations shall be great and free! □

But Milton had been dead more than a century when Wordsworth summed up the spirit of his political philosophy in this sublime verse. And he applied their common doctrine of national greatness in the midst of a crisis more menacing to the nation's safety, if not to its unity, than Milton had ever known. The victory in the field was complete when Milton wrote ; the peril that he had to meet was that the spiritual victories of peace should be neglected or ignored. Wordsworth, writing 'when invasion was expected', and when the stamina of the English people stood to be subjected to a trial more formidable than that slow Nemesis of internal corruption of which Milton had warned his fellow citizens, sounded a note of poetry in which Milton's passion for moral law is inseparably blended with Shakespeare's passion for his country. He calls with glowing confidence on the men of Kent, England's 'bulwarks of liberty'. But his confidence does not prevent his contemplating with dejection the spiritual decadence of the England they were to defend. 'She is a fen of stagnant waters,' an idolator at the shrine of 'rapine, avarice, expense'. It is in this mood that he cries for Milton to be 'living at this hour'. But he repents of 'these unfilial fears', and in the most impassioned of these sonnets he invokes Shakespeare and Milton together, as the supreme guarantors of English freedom :

We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spake, the faith and morals hold  
Which Milton held.

## III

But the nationalism of Wordsworth and Milton holds in it implicitly something wholly foreign to that of Shakespeare. To recognize, as they did, that 'by the soul only the nations shall be great and free', is in effect to recognize that crowning phase of the national ideal before described. A great German historian, Eduard Zeller, writing long before the war, thus expressed the better mind of Europe :

'It is questions of power and advantage, it is prejudices and ambitions, which divide the peoples; what unites them is the culture of ideal interests, morality, art, science, education. In this domain they can unfold all their powers without hostile collision; here they have all common aims, while the widest scope is left for their individual genius in conceiving and executing them.'

In other words, 'by the soul' the nations are not only made 'great and free', but become implicit members of a world community, while by greed of wealth and power and by their mutual fear they are made enemies or rivals. It would be strange, then, if poetry, in which 'soul', however we define it, finds its loftiest expression, had not done something in these latter days to quicken the sense of international fellowship. But this advance was not effected without loss. The larger vision was accompanied by blurred perception nearer home. In the first generation after the Revolution, the growth of the sense of fellowship with other nations habitually meant a loosening of the bond of communion with one's own. Wordsworth bitterly resented his country's declaration of war with the young French republic, and listened fiercely for the news of English defeats. Schiller accepted citizenship of France; Priestley, invited to accept a seat in the assembly shortly after the September massacres, 1792, declined only because of his imperfect

mastery of French. Half a generation later, Byron and Shelley passionately renounced their citizenship of England, and both seemed, by that renunciation, to become citizens, in a fuller sense than ever before, of the kingdom of poetry. Shelley sang with unsurpassed magnificence of a Humanity emancipated from the disintegrating interposition of governments—

Man, one harmonious soul of every soul,  
Whose nature is its own divine control;

and of a universe kindled and interwoven through and through by Beauty and Love; but it was at the price of complete alienation from even the spiritual nationalism of Wordsworth.

But the Revolution whose teaching was the chief source of this cosmopolitan internationalism had, long before Shelley wrote, become the creator of a new and intenser nationalism. The gospel of liberation turned into a gospel of conquest. The despised sentiment of nationality, thus outraged, instantly recovered its force; the Swiss Republicans fought against their fellow republicans for their country. It is Wordsworth, the loftiest spokesman of English nationalism, who utters the first note of internationalism in our poetry. His grief for England is not occasioned only by her spiritual debasement but by her ‘trespasses’ in the pursuit of her own policy against the interests of weaker nations.

✓ If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,  
Bright good were destined, Thou wouldest step between.

His sonnets on the extinction of the Venetian republic, and on the subjugation of Switzerland, are the first great lyrics called forth by the tragedy of another people since Milton’s yet greater ‘Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter’d saints’. And Milton would hardly have spoken with such passion, if he had even spoken at all, had ~~not~~ the

massacred people been fellow Protestants. But Wordsworth is not concerned with their religion ; the Catholic faith of Venice and of Latin Switzerland was nothis ; he only feels poignantly that they had stood for freedom and were now subdued.

But Wordsworth's services to the cause of international liberty were to be far more signal than this, far more signal than is even now generally known. In 1808 the most critical point in the struggle with Napoleon was the Spanish Peninsula. England sent the expeditionary force to Portugal, which was eventually to strike the deadliest blow at Napoleon's power. But its first stage was humiliating. After an indecisive success, the leaders concluded the Convention of Cintra, which virtually purchased their safety, by a surrender of the Portuguese cause. Questions were asked in Parliament. But it was an unpractical poet who, in a spirit worthy of Milton, in one of the most splendid pieces of reasoned eloquence in the language, exposed the motives which had dictated the transaction, and summoned his countrymen to rise to the height of the heroic cause they had undertaken. The political and military situation he argues with the detailed mastery of a statesman, but the informing passion of the whole is his own lofty conviction that, 'by the soul only the Nations shall be great and free,' and that the soul is nowhere more greatly manifested than in the heroic crises of national existence. Even the sonnets do not rise to higher notes of poetry than the prose sentences in which this brooding poet of tranquillity declares that man will always be found more than equal to whatever fate may befall him; it is his fate which, save at challenging crises like this, does not satisfy the need of his spirit.

'The passions of men (I mean the soul of sensibility in the heart of man)—in all quarrels, in all contests, in all quests, in all employments which are either sought by men or thrust upon

them—do immeasurably transcend their objects. The true sorrow of humanity consists in this;—not that the mind of man fails; but that the course and demands of action and of life so rarely correspond with the dignity and intensity of human desires. . . . But, with the remembrance of what has been done, and in the face of the interminable evils which are threatened, a Spaniard can never have cause to complain of this, while a follower of the tyrant remains in arms upon the Peninsula.'

Spain was liberated from Napoleon; but his overthrow was, as little as great military triumphs have commonly been, a victory for freedom. If it unseated the great usurper, it everywhere enthroned political reaction. The ten ensuing years saw a series of national efforts for freedom, followed with passionate sympathy by a new generation of English poets. And a new element enters into their sympathy. Wordsworth's championship of the cause of Spain, Switzerland, and Venice is little touched by historic sense. He sees free citizens deprived of their freedom. Venice is 'the eldest child of Liberty'; Switzerland the seat of 'her chosen music'. He moans for the 'faded' glory of Venice; but her unfading glories do not touch his imagination. He thrills at the heroism of Saragossa, but left it to Southey, Landor, Scott, and Lockhart to capture for English poetry the great legends of Roderick, Julian, and the Cid. And far as he receded from the Revolution, Wordsworth never outgrew its anti-historic bias. Byron and Shelley were more genuine children of the Revolution than Wordsworth had ever been; and they retain its temper to the end. Nevertheless, they lived half a generation later in that swiftly moving time, and they stand for some things which Wordsworth never reached. To them, as to him, the historic spirit as such was strange. But two historic lands stood out for them in consummate splendour from the black wilderness of the past at large. Greece and Italy had naturally been the shrines of scholarship since the Renascence; but there is a vast

step from the cultured homage of Gray, and the majestic tribute of Milton, to the passionate claim to spiritual citizenship which inspired Byron's

O Rome, my country, city of my soul,

and led him to give his life for the deliverance of the Greeks. And for Shelley, too, in *Hellas*, the Greeks are not only victims of Turkish oppression fighting for their freedom, but heirs of republican Athens and of the fellow citizens of Aeschylus.

#### IV

Yet historic apprehension remains, in both poets, rather ardent than penetrating. Some twelve years after the death of Byron European internationalism was lifted to a higher plane of both theoretic and practical significance by the genius of Mazzini. In his glowing and fecundating mind the liberating passion of the Revolution was associated with a no less profound faith in the nationalism which the Revolution had trampled under foot. He, no less than Shelley, looked forward to a dissolution of international strife in a united 'Humanity'. But with Mazzini this united Humanity was a synthesis of the Nations, each pursuing its divinely allotted task, its 'historic mission'. Mazzini thus brought together the two currents of tendency which had divided the previous generations, and had found their extreme examples in Shelley and Scott. The process consummated in the flame-like intensity of Mazzini's vision was only a symptom of the accommodation between the heritage of the Revolution and the new and powerful growth of the historical spirit, which was being more gradually and unconsciously effected in western Europe, and is reflected in the poetry of Victorian England. It did not always take the form of marked international sympathy, but the pronounced insularity which accompanied the

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cultured amenity of Tennyson's genius was itself a somewhat isolated phenomenon in the finer poetic English mind of his times. The part played by the fifty years' struggle for Italian unity in evoking and quickening international sympathy in England cannot be mistaken; and in four of the five distinguished poets in whom this sympathy is conspicuous that struggle found vivid response. Matthew Arnold's 'culture', deriving from the supernational cosmopolitanism of Goethe, was designed precisely as a solvent for such ardent nationalism as Mazzini's; but the two Brownings, in different degrees, stood under his influence, Swinburne was his impassioned disciple, and Meredith, in *Vittoria*, gave us the English epic of the movements and of the man. Robert Browning, who saw the Risorgimento in undress, regarded its heroics with cooler eyes; but he paid tribute to it in the noble poem, 'The Italian in England,' which Mazzini used to read to his fellow exiles in London. The hunted patriot, it will be remembered, has crouched six days among the ferns, when a company of peasant-women went by near his hiding-place. He throws his glove to strike the last, taking his chance of betrayal. The woman gave no sign, but marked the place and went on. He prepares an ingenious tale to explain his position, plausible enough to deceive a peasant. An hour later she returns :

But when I saw that woman's face,  
Its calm simplicity of grace,  
Our Italy's own attitude,  
In which she walked thus far, and stood,  
Planting each naked foot so firm,  
To crush the snake and spare the worm,—  
At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
'I am that man upon whose head  
They fix the price, because I hate  
The Austrians over us,'—

in short, put his life in her hands. She goes back with a message to his friends at Padua. After three days she returns,

I was no surer of sunrise  
Than of her coming.

Mrs. Browning was a far more effusive Italian patriot than her husband, but she had less concentrated power, and the prolonged diatribes of *Casa Guidi Windows* and the *Poems before Congress* are not much more digestible to-day than most of the poetry inspired by obsolete politics. But one figure of hers has something of the quality of her husband's Italian peasant-woman—the court lady of Turin who arrays herself in her most stately dress to visit the soldiers, Italian and French, who have been wounded in defence of Italy at Villa-franca; that hospital is for her the court, and those wounded soldiers kings. And her words to the French soldier strike one note, not the least noble, of internationalism:

Each of the heroes around us has fought for his land and line,  
But thou hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong not thine.  
Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dispossesst,  
~~But~~ blessed are those among nations who dare to be free for the rest.

With Algernon Charles Swinburne the English poetry of international idealism assumes, in great part under the inspiration of Mazzini, to whom *Songs before Sunrise* was dedicated, an altogether larger compass and grander flight, notwithstanding that his fundamental conceptions are still the crude and outworn ideas of the Revolution. Outworn as they are, they receive a new afflatus from his magnificent lyric power. Earth, mother of the peoples, and sister of the stars in their courses, lives again, an aged, tragic figure, and her

Thou that badest man be born, bid man be free.

And so the voices, successively of Greece and Italy, of Spain and France, Russia and Switzerland, of Germany and England, are lifted up in intercession. The burden of the successive chants is the same, and the same impassioned music pervades them all. But the significant thing is that the suffering children of Earth are no longer merged in the vast Shelleyan abstraction, 'Man,' otherwise so familiar in Swinburne; that an attempt, not very searching but unmistakable, is made to interpret the individual genius of the Nations. The 'Litany' is all in one key, and set to one rhythm; but it is a part-song, not a chant in unison. And sometimes he sees aspects of national genius which recent history had obscured. It meant insight as well as detachment to discover the Germany of Tacitus and Grimm's fairy-tales and the Volkslied in the days of Sadowa and Sedan:

I am she beside whose forest-hidden fountains  
Slept freedom armed,  
By the magic born to music in my mountains,  
Heart-chained and charmed.  
By those days the very dream whereof delivers  
My soul from wrong;  
By the sounds that make of all my ringing rivers  
None knows what song;  
By the many tribes and names of my division  
One from another;  
By the single eye of sun-compelling vision,  
Hear us, O mother!

There is no lack of actuality in the ampler modulations of those other 'Songs' offered to the countries of his deeper allegiance, Italy and France. ~Swinburne felt deeply the spell, and no less deeply the shame, of France. She had shown Europe the way to Revolution; she was

the birthplace of his master, Hugo ; but she had also submitted tamely to the yoke of the Second Empire ; and he turned upon her with the fierce rebuke of a lover to a guilty mistress. But with 1870 his anger changed to pity, and he felt that she who had beyond others loved humanity, had, like the Magdalen, atoned for her sins. We are far from the abstract animosities and partisanships of politics when offended Freedom arraigns and pardons the repentant sinner, with an intimacy of sorrow and sympathy like that which made Dante swoon before the unrepentant, Francesca, ‘because she had loved much’ :

Am I not he that hath made thee and begotten thee,  
I, God, the spirit of man?  
Wherefore now these eighteen years hast thou forgotten me,  
From whom thy life began?

Yef I know thee turning back now to behold me,  
To bow thee and make thee bare,  
Not for sin’s sake but penitence, by my feet to hold me,  
And wipe them with thy hair.  
And sweet ointment of thy grief thou hast brought thy master,  
And set before thy lord,  
From a box of flawed and broken alabaster,  
Thy broken spirit, poured.  
And love-offerings, tears and perfumes, hast thou given me,  
To reach my feet, and touch;  
Therefore thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee,  
Because thou hast loved much.

From George Meredith, too, the tragic overthrow of France, no less than the desperate fight for Italian unity, elicited noble poetry—poetry as much more pregnant and weighty in intellectual substance than Swinburne’s, as its music is less eloquent and winged. The ode ‘December 1870’ stands, with the greatest of Wordsworth’s War sonnets, and Shelley’s *Hellas*, and the finest work of Swinburne just noticed, at the head of the

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political poetry of the century. But it differs in kind from the former. Meredith, too, glories in the French battle for liberty :

O she, that made the brave appeal  
For manhood when our time was dark,  
And from our fetters drove the spark  
Which was as lightning to reveal  
New seasons, with the swifter play  
Of pulses, and benigner day;  
She that divinely shook the dead  
From living man; that stretched ahead  
Her resolute forefinger straighf,  
And marched towards the gloomy gate  
Of Earth's Untried. . . .

But he goes on, like Swinburne, to draw with the penetration at once of a stern critic and of a passionate lover, the character of her who in

The good name of Humanity  
Called forth the daring vision! she,  
She likewise half corrupt of sin,  
Angel and wanton! can it be?  
Her star has foundered in eclipse,  
The shriek of madness on her lips:  
Shreds of her, and no more, we see.  
There is horrible convulsion, smothered din,  
As of one who in a grave-cloth struggles to be free.  
Look down where deep in blood and mire,  
Black thunder plants his feet, and ploughs  
The soil for ruin; that is France:  
Still thrilling like a lyre.

And with this keener insight, rooted in historic sense, into the genius of a foreign people, now came finally another element wanting in the international poetry of Byron and Shelley;—a passionate love of, and imaginative understanding for, England herself. Byron and Shelley have no note of joy in England; Browning, so robustly English in temper, has it only at moments;

but Meredith and Swinburne are as firmly rooted in her soil as Shakespeare and Wordsworth, and where in modern poetry is the wonder of this 'enchanted isle' made more alive than in the one poet's pictures of her woodlands and breathing valleys, her Hampshire maids and farmers, in the other poet's pictures of the North Sea surging against the embattled crags and castles of Northumberland?

Moreover, in this latter-day union of what we commonly call national and international idealism, the love of country itself has been lifted to a higher plane. So long as national greatness is conceived in terms of power, or of territory, or even of wealth, the very conception of a community of nations can hardly emerge: other nations are rivals to be beaten, are material to be made use of, are territory to be annexed, or at best, are allies to rally to our help; their individual aims, interests, aspirations, count only as pieces, more or less formidable, in the game of the opposite side or in our own. So far and so long as these conditions prevail, nationalism and internationalism are inconsistent and incompatible; the one can exist only at the expense of the other. But the root fact of the situation and, even in a day of competing armaments and rigid trade barriers, the ground of a far-seeing confidence, is—that in proportion as the aims of a nation cease to be fundamentally material, as soon as it seeks a well-being founded upon the spiritual enlightenment, the mental and moral health of its population, the similar aims of other nations become contributory, instead of rival forces, their advance an element of its own progress; all these multiform national lives becoming figures in the complex pattern of the life of Humanity; and the love of each man for his country, as Mazzini said, only the most definite expression of his love for all the nations of the world. The problem of converting that old intense but narrow love which finds complete expression in a fighting patriotism

into this not less intense love of country which is ‘only the most definite expression’ of a love which goes beyond country—this problem is one with that of transforming the brute-will to master man into the spiritual will to uplift him : and therefore all who are working for the spiritual uplifting of their fellow countrymen are working for humanity, and all who are working for humanity are working for their own land. And if there is something higher than patriotism, as Edith Cavell said with the clear vision of martyrdom, in her last recorded words, so the recognition and fulfilment of that something higher is itself an act of patriotism ; and she herself will be remembered not only as one who loved England, and died for it, but as one who loved England too intensely and too nobly to hate any of her fellow men.